

A Leader's Guide for
THE STORY OF HOPE
Bible Study

November 9, 2009 Edition

Reflects Changes Included in the 2nd Edition of *The Story of Hope*
Published in January 2009



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The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

This Leader’s Guide is based upon the New King James Version of the Bible.

If at all possible, you should attend a Good Soil Evangelism & Discipleship (E&D) training seminar in preparation for using *The Story of Hope (TSOH)*.

For more information see: <http://www.GoodSoil.com/seminars/>

General Instructions

It is our concern that *The Story of Hope (TSOH)* study leaders will assume that they need to teach everything that appears in this Leader’s Guide. The material in this Leader’s Guide is a resource that provides much more information than you will need to teach *The Story of Hope*, in most cases. Don’t complicate the study by giving more information than is necessary for participants to understand the basic Biblical concepts. Please use this material selectively, based upon the needs of the participants in your study. In other words, be **participant-focused** in your teaching and don’t teach things that participants, at their stage of faith journey, don’t need to know. Avoid teaching material just because it is of interest to you or because it is included in this guide.

Before you proceed with this study, be sure to read pages 4-11 in *The Story of Hope*. Familiarize yourself very thoroughly with the “Instructions” on pages 5-6.

There are two major sections in *The Story of Hope*. It is important that you understand the relationship between these two sections and the unique contributions that each makes to the purpose of the book.

First—Pages 12-31 present 40 key events from the chronological Bible story, 20 from the Old Testament and 20 from the New Testament. This is the “good news” of God’s hope for mankind in a narrative (story) form.

Second—Pages 32-39 feature what we call the “chronological bridge to life” (or the “ChronoBridge”). The eight key gospel concepts in the ChronoBridge are presented in the order in which they emerge out of the chronological Bible story. This ChronoBridge presents the “good news” in the form of eight very important concepts (or propositions).

For your own preparation, we recommend these helpful resources:

- *The Old Testament Story: Preparing to Tell God’s Story of Redemption, Part 1* self-study course, written by Dr. David Brooks and published by ABWE’s Center for Excellence in International Ministries.
- *The New Testament Story: Preparing to Tell God’s Story of Redemption, Part 2* self-study course, written by Dr. Larry Waters, edited by Dr. David Brooks, and published by ABWE’s Center for Excellence in International Ministries.

Both of these courses can be ordered from this web page: <http://www.GoodSoil.com/resources/>

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

The Chronological Bible Story: *A Narrative Presentation of God’s Good News of Hope* Pages 12-31 in *The Story of Hope*

The Eternal God

1. In its opening statement, the Bible addresses the most basic issue of human existence by declaring that the something or someone who has always existed is God. Genesis 1:1

a. Why is it reasonable to assume that “something” or “someone” has always existed?

Please Note: Here is an example of the concern expressed at the top of this page. If your Bible study participants don’t have any difficulties with this question, then move on in the study. Don’t feel compelled to elaborate using the material that follows. But if you do, keep it short and simple.

It does not make sense to think that at some previous time absolutely nothing existed and out of nothing (and for no cause) the universe began to exist and then, later, living beings spontaneously originated out of non-living matter. It takes an incredible amount of blind faith to believe this!

It makes more sense to think that something or someone has always existed, either a living Being or non-living matter. To believe in the eternity of either of these requires faith.

It makes even better sense to think that what has always existed is a living God who has the ability to create both non-living matter and other living beings. The opening verse of the Bible asserts that this indeed is the reality of how the universe and life began. Yes, it does require faith to believe this. But as we study *The Story of Hope* this faith will be confirmed by observable evidence.

In order for this study to proceed with any meaning and value, participants who might be skeptical of God’s existence will need to be intellectually honest and open to the possibility that God exists. This does not mean that they need to abandon their unbelief at this point but they should be willing to suspend or neutralize it temporarily in order to give the Bible a fair hearing. Encourage them to approach this study with an open mind and let the Bible speak for itself.

b. Read the first phrase of Genesis 1:1. Which of the following is true? Explain the reasoning behind your choice.

- The Bible begins with an attempt to prove the existence of God.*
- The Bible begins with the assumption that God exists.*

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

“In the beginning God...” is a simple phrase that assumes God’s existence. There is no attempt made to prove His existence with arguments and evidences.

Apparently, the author (who was writing by God’s inspiration) sensed no need to defend God’s existence, so he simply stated it as a reality that will confirm itself as open-minded readers continue to study the remainder of the Bible.

c. Read Psalm 90:2. What does it mean that God is “from everlasting to everlasting”?

This is another way of saying that God has always existed and will always continue to exist. In other words, He is eternal—with no beginning and no end.

This is a clear expression of the Biblical view (mentioned [above](#)) that an eternal living God preceded the physical universe. The verse says even more about God and the universe—that this eternal God created the earth and the world--- which will be addressed in the next event in this study.

d. As we read through the stories of the Bible, we learn more and more about God—who He is and what He is like. At the bottom of each double-page spread (such as this one, pages 12-13) place a mark beside the ways God is portrayed in the four events on the two pages.

Direct participants to the bottom of pages 12-13 and read the instruction and response options found there. Explain that the Bible reveals much truth about God to us. It was given to us so that we could know about Him—who He is and what He is like. Sometimes this information about God comes to us in the Bible through direct statements (such as Psalm 90:2) but often we learn about Him just by reading the stories of the Bible, to see what He has done, how He did it, and especially how He relates to men and women.

Encourage them to be thinking of the ways in which God is portrayed as they study the events in *The Story of Hope*. At the end of each double-page spread, stop and ask participants to indicate (with the check boxes at the bottom of the pages) the ways God was portrayed in the events just studied.

Discuss these observations before moving on to the next events.

Supplemental Information



The Triquetra Symbol: The next few paragraphs should not be introduced into the study unless the student specifically raises a question about the image on the top of page 12. We have included this information on the “triquetra” only to pre-answer some questions that Bible study leaders or students may have.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

The three-pointed symbol in the God-image on the top of page 12 (in the Eternal God section) is known as the “triquetra.” Some people say that this is only a pagan Celtic symbol and it is totally inappropriate to use it as we have done here. Some people, for example, have falsely speculated that the triquetra is an interlocking of three “6” symbols, representing the “666” mark of the beast.

While it is true that ancient pagans in northern Europe did use a symbol similar to this, it is equally true that the triquetra was one of the earliest symbols used by the Christian church to represent the doctrine of the trinity—the unified points representing God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.



You may recall the very earliest symbol used by Christians was this fish symbol. Some sources indicate that the three interlocking parts of the triquetra were designed to represent three “fish” symbols, unified into one overall symbol.

Again—we suggest that you just read the above paragraphs for your own benefit and do not complicate this study by discussing the triquetra in any detail.

It would be appropriate to point out the symbol in the image and make a comment such as this:

“The three-cornered symbol in this image is an ancient symbol that Christians have used for many, many years to represent God.”

The Crucial Nature of Genesis 1:1:

The Christian life and worldview is founded upon the Bible.

The foundational book of the Bible is Genesis.

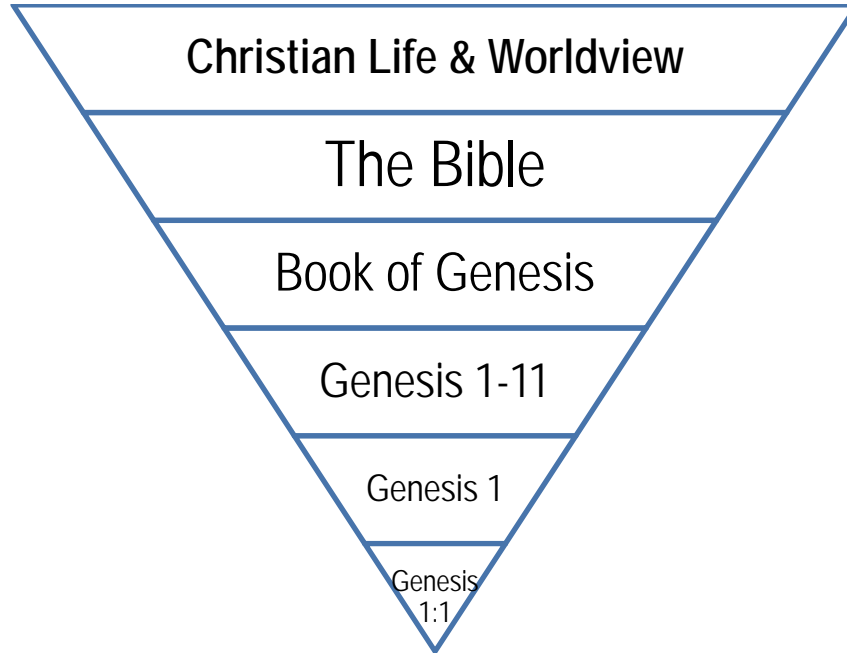
The foundation of Genesis is laid down in its first 11 chapters.

The foundation of this section in Genesis is chapter one.

The foundation of Genesis chapter one is verse one.

Thus, the entire Christian life and worldview rests on Genesis 1:1. And if a person can accept Genesis 1:1 by faith, he or she should have no trouble accepting any of the rest of the Bible.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide



Recommended Book: *Genesis in Space and Time* by Francis Schaeffer (InterVarsity Press, 1972)

This little book provides an excellent apologetical commentary on Genesis chapters 1-11. Thus, it provides information that is helpful in teaching the first 10 events in *The Story of Hope* to people who may be skeptical concerning the early chapters of Genesis.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Creation of the Earth

2. The Bible continues by saying that God created the universe including our earth and its heavens, as well as its living organisms—plants and animals of all kinds. Genesis 1:1-25

a. First day of creation—Read verses 1-5.

- In its initial state of creation (verse 2), what was the earth like?

It was without form—the basic elements of the universe were created in an incomplete or unformed state.

It was void (empty)—God had not yet caused it to be inhabited with living creatures—plants, animals, and human beings.

It was dark—darkness is the absence of light and God had not yet created light.

Note: Apparently, in its initial state of creation, the space around the earth was filled with some kind of pervasive unformed watery substance that is referred to here as “the deep.”

- What did God do in verses 3-5?

God called light into existence and then established times of light (day) and darkness (night) for the earth. This would seem to indicate that the earth now was rotating on its axis and that some stationary light source on one side of the earth was providing light for the day.

b. Second day of creation—Read verses 6-8. What did God divide on this day?

God created a “firmament” (literally = “expanse” or “spread-out-thinness”) to separate the pervasive watery substance that then surrounded the earth. He called that expanse “Heaven”—an atmospheric heaven, not to be confused with another “Heaven” mentioned later in the Bible.

The waters above that firmament probably became the vaporous clouds of water droplets that now float in the earth’s atmosphere. On the next day of creation, we’ll see what God did with the waters that God placed under the firmament.

c. Third day of creation—Read verses 9-13.

- What happened first on the third day (verses 9-10)?

God gathered the waters under the firmament (on the surface of the earth) together in such a way as to allow dry land to appear. God then called the

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

waters “Seas” and the dry land “Earth.”

- **What happened next on this same day (verses 11-13)?**

God then called various types of vegetation into existence and provided a way for them to perpetuate themselves through seeds.

- d. **Fourth day of creation—Read verses 14-19. What were some of God’s earth-related purposes for the lights* that He set in the earth’s heavens?**

*Note: The term “lights” literally means “light-givers.”

God created the earth’s sun to provide light for daytime. It replaced the temporary light source that God provided on the first day (verses 3-5).

God created the earth’s moon to provide light for nighttime.

These “lights” also were intended to provide a way of marking seasons and years.

- e. **Fifth day of creation—Read verses 20-23. What animals were created on this day?**

Flying birds & creatures in that live in the water

- f. **Sixth day of creation, part 1—Read verses 24-25. What animals were created next?**

Land animals, such as cattle, creeping things, and beasts

Supplemental Information

Were the creation days periods of 24 hours? It is very possible that your student will ask, “What kind of days were these?” “Were they literal 24 hour days or so-called “days” that were actually long ages?”

If so, point out that the phrase “evening and morning” that is used to describe each day seems to indicate that these were literal periods of 24 hours. Also, since God is powerful enough to bring the universe into existence out of nothing, it would not have been a problem for Him to have created the day-by-day things described here within the time frames of 24 hours.

Some people have asked us how to deal with these kinds of issues that can be unnecessarily controversial. Consider these guidelines for this and other potentially story-stopping issues:

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

(1) If the student appears to be emotionally attached to and/or pre-inclined toward a certain view that is not essential to understanding the overall Big Story of the Bible, ask him/her to make a note of his question and make plans to address it after you have completed this series of studies in *The Story of Hope*. Be sure to do as you promise.

(2) If the student is clearly sincere, wanting to know what the Bible teaches on a subject such as this, you may want to spend more time than normal on the subject. But don’t get too bogged down on one of the many topics in *The Story of Hope*, unless the topic is absolutely crucial to the integrity of the story.

(3) Above all, keep the big picture of this “Story of Hope” study in view. Be alert to topics and discussions that will tend to de-focus the study from where it is intended to go.

For your own resource and session preparation for events 1-12 (stories and teachings that are found in the book of Genesis) we recommend this helpful Bible commentary:

***The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* by Henry M. Morris** (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1976)

This book is particularly helpful for preparation in teaching these earlier events found in Genesis.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Creation of Mankind

- 3. Then God created a man and a woman, Adam and Eve, and commissioned them to rule over His earthly creation, but told them not to eat the fruit of one particular tree. Genesis 1:26-31; Genesis 2:7-25**

- a. Read Genesis 1:26-27. Compared to the other creatures God made, what was unique and special about the creation of man and woman?**

They were made in God’s own image.

The image of God spoken of here does not suggest some kind of physical image or appearance. God is a spirit (a non-material) being.

God favored mankind with some important non-material characteristics that God Himself possesses, but to a much greater degree than man—the ability to choose, the ability to love, the ability to reason, the ability to communicate, the ability to be righteous, the ability to exercise authority, and etc. Although animals may possess some of these characteristics to some degree, man originally was unique in the degree to which he possessed them. This is probably what the text means when it says that mankind was created in God’s image. It’s a non-material image, not a material or physical image.

- b. Read Genesis 1:28-31. What special role did God give to them that was not given to other creatures that God made?**

God gave mankind the authority and the ability to rule over God’s creation, and commanded them to do so. The “image of God” characteristics made this possible.

- c. Read Genesis 2:7. What additional facts do we learn here regarding the creation of Adam?**

God formed Adam’s body from the dust of the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, which resulted in him becoming a living being.

- d. Read Genesis 2:8-9. What indications do we see in these verses that the Garden of Eden was a beautiful and fruitful paradise?**

God placed all kinds of trees to grow there—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. It must have been a beautiful place, as well as a place where delicious food was readily available.

- e. Read Genesis 2:15-17. What one thing did God tell Adam not to do and what did God say would happen if this command was disobeyed?**

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

God commanded Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He told him that he would die if and when he disobeyed this command.

f. Read Genesis 2:18-25. **True** or False? *At this time, Adam and Eve were living in a condition of innocence.* What indication in this verse leads to your conclusion?

They were both naked and they felt no shame. It appears that they were as innocent as babies with regard to their nakedness.

It can be argued that they sensed no shame for their nakedness because they were husband and wife. It is certainly true that physical intimacy is perfectly natural and normal for married couples. But hold this thought for now. Event number eight will shed some additional light on this subject.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Fall of Lucifer

4. **At some earlier time Lucifer, originally a beautiful angel of God, led other angels in a failed rebellion against God and became known as Satan, the Devil. Ezekiel 28:11-17; Isaiah 14:12-15**

There are various evangelical views regarding when this happened, but there is no definitive Biblical evidence to clearly prove any of them. We have purposely left the time designation as vague and indefinite. For the purpose of this study, do not lose the focus of the main purpose of this study by trying to pinpoint the specific time that Lucifer fell.

- a. **Angels are spirit beings that God created to worship and serve Him.**

Read (or ask the student) to read this statement. Many people are curious about angels, so this is a place where the study could become sidetracked from the major focus of the study. You may want to elaborate briefly regarding angels, but avoid spending too much time on this subject. More will be said about angels in some future events.

- b. **Ezekiel and Isaiah provided a description of Lucifer’s downfall by comparing Lucifer to the kings of Tyre and Babylon.**

- **Read Ezekiel 28:11-17. What was Lucifer originally like?**

He was a model of perfection—full of wisdom and perfect in beauty, adorned with many kinds of precious stones, anointed as a guardian cherub (special type of angel to guard God’s holiness), ordained of God and dwelt with Him on the holy mount (in heaven), walked among the fiery stones (gold?), and originally blameless in his ways.

- **Read Isaiah 14:12-15. What did Lucifer aspire to do that led to his downfall?**

Lucifer aspired to ascend to heaven and raise his throne above God’s stars and sit on the utmost heights of God’s sacred mountain. He aspired to make himself like the Most High God. In short, he intended to be like or equal with God!

In verse 15, what did God say would happen to him?

God would defeat him—bring him down to the depths of the pit.

- c. **Read Matthew 25:41. How does this verse relate to Isaiah 14:15? Hint: The Devil is another name for Lucifer.**

There is a place of everlasting fire that has been prepared specifically for the

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

devil (Lucifer) and his angels. This is the destiny (“the depths of the pit”) for Lucifer when God will bring him down in his final defeat.

d. Who do you think the Devil’s angels are—the ones mentioned in Matthew 25:41?

First, ask the student this question to see what he/she says. Unless he/she has some previous knowledge of the Bible on this subject, his/her response will only be a guess since we have not read any Bible passage that would suggest an answer to the question.

Second, explain that the Devil’s angels would not be spirit beings that the Devil (Lucifer) has created because there is no indication in the Bible that Lucifer has the power to create another living being. That power is reserved only for God.

Third, explain (without much elaboration) that, in another place in the Bible* (but do not take time to read the verses or cite the reference), the Bible seems to indicate that Lucifer led other angelic beings in his revolt against God. Thus, when Lucifer was cast down (or “fell”) from God’s holy presence, these angels fell with him. They are probably the evil spirits or “demons” that we will read about later in our study.

Make brief comments here and move on. Do not allow the discussion to be diverted from the major focus of the study.

*Revelation 12:7-8

e. We do not know exactly when Lucifer rebelled. It may have been much earlier, but it certainly occurred before the following event.

This statement is designed to serve as a transition into event four.

Supplemental Information

Were Isaiah and Ezekiel really referring to Lucifer? As a study leader, you need to know that not all evangelical Bible scholars hold the view that Isaiah and Ezekiel were actually referring to Lucifer in their prophecies involving the kings of Babylon and Tyre.

For a more complete discussion regarding this Bible passage, read the section on the book of Ezekiel in Unit XII “God Exiles Judah” in *The Old Testament Story Bible* study course written by Dr. David Brooks (published by ABWE’s Center for Excellence in International Ministries).

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The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

How is God Portrayed in the Events on Pages 12-13?

Review with the student the instructions in point d. of event one (“The Eternal God” on top of page 12 in *The Story of Hope*).

Since this is the first time that you have come to this kind of activity in the study, we recommend that you do this activity with the student. As you do, help the student to think of the answers as much as possible. This first time, you may need to provide more direction in determining the answer than will be necessary later in the study.

For example, ask:

“Did we see God portrayed as the Almighty Creator in either of these events?”

Obviously, the answer should be “Yes.” That was evident in events one, two, and three. Allow the student to share his thoughts and then you can share some additional ones.

“Did we see God portrayed as the Supreme Authority in either of these events?”

Discuss.

“Did we see God portrayed as a Just Judge in either of these events?” Discuss.

Etc...until all 14 characteristics of God have been covered.

Don’t think that you (and the student) need to find all 14 characteristics in the four events on any of the double-page spreads.

Remember the purpose of these “bottom of the double-page spread” activities—to help the student learn about God, who He is and what He has done and still does, as the student reads and studies the Bible.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Beginning of Human Sin

5. In continued defiance against God, Satan enticed Eve to eat of the forbidden tree and Eve then influenced Adam to do the same, in spite of God’s clear and loving warning. Genesis 3:1-6

a. Keep in mind this phrase from the last book of the Bible: “*The dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan*” (Revelation 20:2).

This statement clearly identifies Satan and the Devil as one and the same evil being. It also connects Satan/the Devil to “the serpent of old,” which most likely is referring to the serpent that Lucifer (Satan/the Devil) embodied in order to tempt Eve in the Garden of Eden.

b. Read Genesis 3:1-5. Satan appeared to Eve in the form of a serpent and...

- Misquoted God to make Him seem to be unloving (compare Genesis 2:16-17 with 3:1).

God’s statement in Genesis 2:16-17:

“Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat...”

Satan’s question in Genesis 3:1:

“Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”

(Satan implied that God prohibited Adam and Eve from eating from any of the trees of the garden—that all of them were prohibited.)

- Denied that God could or would punish disobedience as He had promised (see verse 4).

“You shall not surely die.” (In other words, “God would not and maybe even could not cause you to die.”)

- Suggested that God only gave this warning because He is selfish and jealous (see verse 5).

“For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God...” (In other words, “God is just trying to scare you because He doesn’t want you to become like Him.”)

c. **True** or false? *Satan wanted Eve to doubt that God is good, true to His promises, and holy.*

d. Read Genesis 3:6. What three factors motivated Eve to eat the fruit that God had forbidden?

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

(1) The tree was good for food, which appealed to the desires of her flesh. So, in order to enjoy the taste of this delicious food, she disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit.

(2) The tree was pleasant to the eyes, which appealed to the desires of her eyes. So, in order to possess this beautiful object, she disobeyed God and took the forbidden fruit and then ate it.

(3) The tree was desirable to her because it would make her wise*, in an earthly sort of way. So, in a prideful desire to gain what she thought was God-like wisdom, she disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit.

e. Any act of disobedience against what God has commanded is called *sin*.

To this point, in the first four events of *The Story of Hope*, the term “sin” has not been used (other than in the title for this event). It is important now to introduce the term and to define it properly.

Supplemental Information

Knowing Good and Evil: Use the following information only if you think that you need to help the student understand the essential truths of this event. As always, avoid getting off track on secondary issues.

*Yes, in a sense her eyes would be opened to know good and evil if she disobeyed God because she would know evil by her personal experience. But what the serpent did not tell her is that she would have been better off not to know/experience evil (through disobedience). She would have been better off to have remained in the innocent state in which God made her.

God knows good and evil, as the serpent stated. However, God’s knowledge of evil did not come by experience. He is perfectly holy and sinless. God knows evil intellectually, but not experientially. So, when Eve disobeyed God, in one sense she did become like God (she knew evil). But, in another very important sense she became even more unlike God (she experienced evil and was permanently tainted by its many undesirable effects).

You may want to mention (but not dwell on the idea for long) that if we continue to study the Bible carefully, we’ll see that these are three of the major ways in which men and women are tempted throughout the remainder of the Bible. And even now, in our generation, we are commonly tempted by the desires of our flesh, the desires of our eyes, and our pride which entices us to want what we think will make us superior to others.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

1 John 2:16 – “For all that is in the world—the lust [desire] of the flesh, the lust [desire] of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.”

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Origin of Death

6. Because God is a holy and just judge, Adam and Eve suffered the consequences of their disobedience; they immediately died spiritually and eventually died physically. Genesis 3:7-13; Genesis 5:5

a. The essence of death is separation. Three kinds of death result from sin: spiritual death, physical death, and an eternal death.

All novice Bible students will think only of one thing when they hear the word “death.” Physical death will immediately come to their minds. It is important at this point to explain that the essence of death is separation and that there are three kinds of death mentioned in the Bible.

b. Read Genesis 3:7-13. What indications do you see here that Adam and Eve’s sin resulted in the following:

- **Spiritual death (separation from God), which caused a...**
- **Deep sense of guilt, shame, and fear, which led to...**
- **Problems in their relationship with each other.**

They immediately became shamefully aware of their nakedness and devised a way to cover their bodies. (verses 7 & 11)

Verse 7 seems to imply that they began to cover their nakedness, even while they were alone together as man and wife, before they thought about God coming to them.

Compare that with Genesis 2:25 in event three (page 13 in *The Story of Hope*). In their pre-disobedient innocence they were totally oblivious to their nakedness, just as babies are in their innocence.

They also attempted to hide from God when they heard Him approach them in the garden. (verse 8)

God’s coming to them in the garden for intimate Creator-human fellowship had probably been a regular highlight in Adam and Eve’s daily schedule. But what had been treasured was now feared.

It is likely that they did not just hide from God because they were naked, but also because they sensed the guilt of their disobedience. Most of us can remember dreading to meet our parents, guardians, or other people in authority over us after we disobeyed them but knew that they had discovered it.

It also appears that Adam and Eve also feared their Creator God in a negative way for the first time, not knowing what He might do in response to their disobedience.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Then, they began to make alibis for their disobedience and began to shift the blame to others. Eve blamed the serpent and Adam blamed Eve and God. (verses 12-13)

c. Read Genesis 5:5. What other penalty did Adam eventually have to experience for his sin?

“So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.” (Genesis 5:5)

It was God’s holy justice that effected (brought about or caused to happen) the physical part of the “death” penalty that He had previously prescribed for disobedience. But it was God’s grace (favor that was undeserved) that permitted Adam to live for hundreds of years after his initial disobedience against God’s law.

d. Read Genesis 5:8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 27, and 31.

Verse 8: Seth (Adam’s son) died.

Verse 11: Enosh (Seth’s son) died.

Verse 14: Cainan (Enosh’s son) died.

Verse 17: Mahalalel (Cainan’s son) died.

Verse 20: Jared (Mahalalel’s son) died.

Verse 27: Methuselah (Enoch’s son) died.

Verse 31: Lamech (Methuselah’s son) died.

Note: If someone asks why these people lived such long lives, simply explain that some of the dreadful effects of sin took many years to begin to become painfully and widely obvious throughout the human race.

For example, the diseases that threaten our health are the result of Adam and Eve’s sin. These diseases probably emerged slowly and spread gradually. And as they did, human lives were shortened.

Then, read Romans 5:12. In what two ways are we all affected by Adam’s disobedience in Genesis 3?

(1) Adam’s sinful nature has been passed down to us, his human descendants; we have all inherited it.

(2) Sin’s penalty of death (spiritual, physical, and eternal*) is something that all humans (descendants of Adam and Eve) will experience, because we have all sinned.

*We’ll talk about eternal death at a later more appropriate place in the study, so postpone a discussion of eternal death until then.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Promise of a Satan-Conqueror

7. God then promised that a special offspring of Eve would someday conquer Satan because of Satan’s evil participation in Adam and Eve’s disobedience. Genesis 3:14-15

a. Read Genesis 3:14. What changes did God impose upon the serpent-animal?

We assume from reading this story that Satan either took on the form of a serpent or that he entered into the body of an existing serpent. Since the serpent was cursed by God for what happened in the Garden of Eden, it would seem that Satan entered into the body of one particular compliant serpent. We use the term “serpent-animal” here to distinguish between Satan and the animal (serpent) that Satan entered to accomplish this evil deed.

Many Bible scholars think that prior to this time the serpent was a beautiful and charming animal that possessed legs and walked. From verse one in this chapter, we know that serpents were the most cunning of the animals God made. God’s curse on the serpent reduced it (and all serpents to come later) to a lowly creature that slithered on its belly in the dust of the earth.

b. Read Genesis 3:15.

The “serpent” mentioned in verse 14 is undoubtedly a reference to the serpent-animal, a literal snake. However, it seems that there is a change in verse 15. Bible scholars generally think that when God addresses the “serpent” in this verse He is speaking to Satan, the evil archenemy of God who entered into the serpent. Keep this in mind as you read and study verse 15.

Choose one interpretation:

- God was simply establishing hostility between people and snakes.
 No, something more significant was happening here.

“Enmity” is a deep-seated mutual hatred. While it is true that many people say they “hate snakes” (serpents), there is no reason to believe that snakes hate people. When snakes strike humans, they generally do so out of fear and for self protection rather than because they hate people. Fear is the mutual emotion that people and snakes possess in relation to each other.

In your explanation of this verse, avoid:

- (1) Going into too much detail at this point.
- (2) Interpreting the specific prophetic significance of the verse. That information will come later in the study.

Here are some observations that would be appropriate to make at this point:

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

(1) There will be some enduring animosity that will exist between Adam and Eve’s descendants (human beings) and the offspring of the serpent.

(2) Most Bible scholars believe that the “seed” (offspring) of the serpent mentioned here is not the offspring of serpent-animals (more snakes) but the evil spirit beings that Satan controls—perhaps the angels (now called “demons”) that followed Lucifer in his rebellion against God (see event four).

(3) This would explain the ongoing struggle between humans and Satan-controlled evil spirits that can be seen over and over as one studies the Bible.

(4) There seems to be one singular male descendant of Eve that will be uniquely involved in “bruising” (or “crush,” as in some translations) the head of the serpent-Satan.

c. The *seed* (offspring) of the woman would: (check all that are true)

Be a representative of the human race.

In the last two phrases of verse 15, most Bible translations suggest that there will be one male descendant of Adam and Eve who will conquer Satan.*

Damage one of the most critical parts of the serpent’s body.

The head is one of the most critical parts of any animal’s body. That is the reason why helmets are vital pieces of protective armor for people in battle. Thus, when God pronounced that Satan’s head would someday be crushed (or bruised), He was declaring that Satan would ultimately be defeated.

Suffer some lesser harm in administering this blow.

The heel of this Satan-Conqueror person would be wounded, but generally a blow to the heel is only a temporary inconvenience. It is far less severe than a crushing blow to the head.

d. Keep this in mind: This person would be the seed (offspring) of the *woman*—no mention was made that he would be the seed or offspring of man!

Most of the time when the Bible speaks of the “seed” in terms of human reproduction or offspring, it is used in reference to a man. It seems a bit odd here that Adam (or “the man”) isn’t mentioned. God only mentions the woman’s seed (or offspring).

Note: Don’t make too much, especially at this point, of this statement. Just point it out and move on. Make the statement and let sink in, but don’t try to resolve its mystery.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Supplemental Information

The Seed (offspring) of the Woman: *The original (Hebrew) language from which this verse was translated would allow for this “seed” to be collective (a group of offspring) and the pronoun could be translated “it” and not necessarily “he” (a masculine person). However, the way the verse is typically translated is the way that Christians have traditionally interpreted it.

For a more complete discussion regarding this Bible passage, read Unit III “Adam and Eve Fall” in *The Old Testament Story* Bible study course written by Dr. David Brooks (published by ABWE’s Center for Excellence in International Ministries).

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The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Provision of Coverings

8. After Adam and Eve attempted to cover their guilt and shame with fig leaves, God graciously replaced the leaves with clothing He made from animal skins. Genesis 3:7, 21

a. Read Genesis 3:7 and then read Genesis 3:21.

At this point, you simply want the students to see the two kinds of coverings (clothing) that Adam and Eve wore after they sinned and became aware of their nakedness. Just identify the two types of garments now. You will discuss the differences in just a few minutes.

b. Look for at least two differences between the manner in which Adam and Eve were clothed in verse 7 and the way they were clothed in verse 21. Hints: Who prepared the coverings? What kinds of coverings were used?

(1) They (Adam & Eve) prepared their initial coverings (verse 7). God prepared the garments in verse 21.

(2) The coverings that Adam and Eve prepared were fig leaves that were sewed together. These would have been very fragile and temporary. God provided garments of skin, which would have been much less fragile and would have lasted for a much longer time.

c. **True** or False? *Because of their sin, it appears that Adam and Eve’s loss of innocence would continue for the long-term.*

Notice that God did not reprimand Adam and Eve for clothing themselves after they sinned against Him. To the contrary, He affirmed their decision to cover their nakedness by providing them with even more enduring garments. God knew that their loss of innocence would continue as long as they lived.

d. **True** or False? *It appears that Adam and Eve’s sin made it necessary for one or more innocent animals to be killed to provide these coverings.*

The text does not specifically say that God killed one or more animals to provide the skins needed for Adam and Eve’s clothing. God could have created animal-skin garments the same way He created animals—“poof” out of nothing.

But there are some good reasons to believe that animals died in this process:

(1) It was Adam and Eve’s sin that created their need for coverings. Their loss of innocence was a result of their sin.

(2) God had warned them that the penalty for disobedience to His command would be death.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

(3) The death of innocent animals would have been a stark object lesson to remind Adam and Eve of how their sin affected God’s other creatures.

Can you imagine how appropriately traumatic this experience was to Adam and Eve—to see the blood of innocent animals that died as a result of the evil choices they made? The guilt and shame that resulted from their sin was covered by the skins of innocent animals that died for them!

How is God Portrayed in the Events on Pages 14-15?

If necessary, review with the student the instructions in point d. of event one (“The Eternal God” on top of page 12 in *The Story of Hope*).

Remember the purpose of these “bottom of the double-page spread” activities—to help the student learn about God, who He is and what He has done and still does, as the student reads and studies the Bible.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Banishment from Eden

9. **Because Adam and Eve’s disobedience caused them to forfeit their privilege to live in the paradise garden where God had placed them, God drove them out of it. Genesis 3:22-24**

- a. **Read the first statement in Genesis 3:22.**

Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil...”

Note: This will be a review of what was stated in the [Supplemental Information section of event five](#). Please re-read that section.

Even though this may be a “repeat” of what was explained in event 5, it is important enough to go over it again with the student. In event 5 it was presented as optional information, so the student may not have been exposed to it at that time.

True or False? *Because they had eaten fruit from the forbidden tree, Adam and Eve now had knowledge of evil from personal experience.*

Prior to eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve only knew “good.” They did not know “evil” in any sense—intellectually or experientially.

But after disobeying God, they not only had a personal and intellectual knowledge of good (from their past) but they also had two kinds of knowledge of evil—experiential knowledge as well as a newly acquired intellectual knowledge.

If so, how is this different from God’s knowledge of evil?

God has never experienced evil; He is perfectly holy and sinless. But as an all-knowing God, He knows all about it.

- b. **Read the second half of verse 22 in Genesis 3 and on through 3:24.**

- **Fact 1: Verses 23-24 tell us that God expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden.**

Notice that Adam’s vocation did not change, but his location did change.

- **Fact 2: The second part of verse 22 reveals God’s reason for expelling them.**

Read the second part of verse 22 and then transition to the next point (point “c.” below) because it is there that you will deal with verse 22b.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

c. Questions regarding the banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden:

- **Was this an act of God’s judgment?** Yes, in a sense.

Explain. The Bible doesn’t say specifically that God drove them out of the garden because they sinned, but their banishment from the special garden was definitely a consequence of their sin, a blessing forfeited—a consequence enforced by God. And in that sense God judged them by banishing them from the garden.

- **Was this also in some way a gracious act by God?** Yes.

Explain. Go back to the second part of verse 22 and re-read: “...And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever—”

The specifically stated reason that God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden was a gracious blessing to them.

(1) Remember that there were two “special trees” in the Garden of Eden—the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life.

(2) Not much is said about the tree of life, but verse 22 seems to indicate that if Adam and Eve had touched the tree of life, they would have lived forever.

(3) Why would that have been bad? It would have been devastating because they would have lived forever in their sinful condition.

(4) By protecting them from touching the tree of life as sinners, God drove them from the garden to protect them—for their eternal benefit.

(5) Even though death is a dreadful curse that Adam and Eve had to bear, it was better for them to die than to live forever in their sinful condition.

(6) Now read verse 24 of this chapter (Genesis 3:24) with that in mind.

(7) Later, as we get deeper into *The Story of Hope* we’ll learn that the real hope for mankind lies beyond the grave—after death.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

The Great Flood

10. Throughout the years to follow, the human race grew and became so sinful that God destroyed the earth and its inhabitants with a great flood, except for God-fearing Noah and his family. Genesis 6:5—8:22

- a. Read Genesis 6:5-7 and 11-12.

What influenced God to send such a devastating flood?

With the exception of one family, the entire human race (mankind) turned away from their Creator-God and began to pursue their own sinful desires.

God, whose very nature is holy and repulsed by sin, was deeply grieved by these actions and lifestyles.

As the Creator of all mankind, God certainly had the authority to stop this wickedness and violence and to punish those who participated in it.

As the righteous and just Judge of the world He created, God did exactly what was right and what was fair. People flagrantly defied Him and broke His laws, so after years of restraint, God pronounced and executed judgment upon this wicked generation.

How serious was this problem that caused the flood?

You might want the student to circle or underline, in the Bible he/she is using, all of the words or phrases that indicate that this was a very serious situation. Or, simply ask them to point them out to you. Here are some typical responses that would be accurate:

“how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become”

“every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time”

“earth was corrupt”

“earth...was full of violence”

“all the people of the earth had corrupted their ways”

- b. Read Genesis 6:8-10 and 7:1.

How did Noah differ from the other people of his generation?

Noah was a “righteous” man, which means that he generally tried to do what was right.

He was “blameless among the people of his time.” This doesn’t mean that he was perfect. It simply means that when he did wrong, he always tried to take

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

responsibility for what he had done and correct it.

What do you think it meant that “Noah walked with God”?

Noah tried to live the way that God wanted men and women to live. He maintained a close personal relationship with God and talked with God regularly through prayer.

c. Read Genesis 6:5—8:22. If we take this story at face value (literally), does it appear that this flood was:

- A local flood
- A worldwide flood

Whether or not this great flood was a local flood or a worldwide (universal) flood is not an absolutely crucial issue in the overall study of *The Story of Hope*. Although the evidence for a worldwide flood does appear to be obvious to us, it is important to realize that some Bible-believing scholars have interpreted this flood as a local event that only covered one large valley where the human race was concentrated at that time.

But don’t let this issue become a “story stopper.” But, if the student is particularly interested you could give them a sheet of paper with two columns:

Local Flood	Worldwide Flood

Ask them to read and study Genesis 6-8 and make notes of evidences in the Bible text that would seem to indicate that the flood was contained to one local valley, as well as the evidence that seems to suggest that the flood covered the face of the entire earth.

d. Read Genesis 6:15. How large was the ark?

The ark was 300 cubits (450 feet or 138 meters) long by 50 cubits (75 feet or 23 meters) wide by 30 cubits (45 feet or 13.5 meters) high. It probably had a capacity of about 1,400,000 cubic feet (40,000 cubic meters), which was about equal to 522 standard livestock railroad cars.

This information may be helpful, particularly if the student is skeptical about the

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

ability of Noah’s ark to contain the animals that were taken onto the ark. You may also point out that only two or seven of every “kind” of animal were taken on the ark and that “kind” was probably a broader classification than “specie.” Also, explain that some (or all) of the animals may have been very young and, thus, not fully grown.

e. From this story, what do we learn about:

- **God?**

God is holy; He was moved to punish mankind’s sin.

God was just (fair) in His judgment.

God was patient and gracious to restrain His judgment for so long.

God was the one who saved them from perishing. He was the One who warned Noah of the flood to come, who gave Noah the instructions for building the ark, and the One who closed the door of the ark prior to the beginning of the flood.

- **Mankind?**

Men and women are sinful and naturally inclined to all kinds of wicked behaviors. They are naturally rebellious against God and His laws. They often refuse to heed God’s warnings of judgment and His gracious provision of forgiveness and blessings. But, they also have the capacity (with God’s help) to choose to love and serve God Him, as illustrated in the life of Noah.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Promises to Abraham

- 11. Many years after the flood, God called Abraham to be the father of a very large nation through whom all peoples of the earth would receive a special spiritual blessing. Genesis 11:31—12:7**

You may want to prevent any confusion in the minds of the student by explaining the seeming discrepancy between the name “Abram” and “Abraham.” He was originally called “Abram” but God later changed his name to “Abraham.”

- a. Read Genesis 11:31-32 and locate Ur, Haran, and Canaan on the map on pages 8 and 9.**

(1) Explain why Terah (Abram’s father) followed this route. The section of the area marked by green on the map has often been called the Fertile Crescent. Terah was a wealthy man who possessed large herds and flocks of livestock. It the vast arid area now known as the Arabian Desert would have been difficult, if not impossible, for him to have crossed with so many animals that needed to be fed and watered on a daily basis. The Fertile Crescent route provided vegetation and water for Terah’s family, servants, and animals.

Note: It is about 600 miles from where Ur was located to where Haran was located.

This is a good place in the study to compare this map on pages 8-9 with a modern map. Point out the modern countries that now exist in this Fertile Crescent area.

(2) Both the city of Ur and the city of Haran were known for the idolatrous practice of moon worship. Terah, Abram’s father, was most likely a moon-worshipper to the very end of his life. Perhaps that is why God didn’t move Abram into Canaan until after his idol-worshipping father died.

- b. Read Genesis 12:1-3.**

At the end of verse 3 there is one special promise to keep in mind: Since the promise that all families of the earth would be blessed through Abraham is repeated several times in the Bible, obviously it is a very important. In what sense could this promise be realized? To learn the answer to this question, you will need to wait and see how *The Story of Hope* eventually develops.

Do not explain all that you may know about this promise, at this point. Just be sure to point it out and emphasize it strongly enough that the student will remember this promise when it comes up in future events.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

c. Read Genesis 12:4-7. What additional promise did God give Abraham in verse 7?

In verse 7 God made this promise to Abram: “To your offspring I will give this land [Canaan].” But there was one major problem—the land was already inhabited by other people, the Canaanites. Explain that we will learn later how this all turns out.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Offering of Isaac

12. God tested Abraham’s faith by asking him to sacrifice Isaac, the son through whom spiritual blessings would come, but at the last moment God provided a substitute sacrifice. Genesis 22:1-18

a. Read Genesis 22:1-14. Two obvious questions:

- **Why did God ask Abraham to sacrifice his own son?**
- **Why did Abraham obey such an unusual instruction?**

b. The answers have something to do with what Abraham believed that God could and would do for him..

To a person not acquainted with the Bible, this may appear to be a bizarre event and God may seem to be a heartless, overly demanding deity. Explain to the student that it will make a lot more sense after we have studied it and look back on it. Also explain that God knew what would happen long before he issued the command.

- **See verse 5.**

Ask the question: “When Abraham spoke to his servants in verse 5, whom did he tell them would be returning back to them?”

Notice that he said, “I and the boy go over there...then we will come back to you.”

Then read Hebrews 11:17-19.

Explain that these verses toward the end of the Bible were written about 2,000 years after the event we are studying in Genesis 22. They provide some special insight into what Abraham was thinking when he placed Isaac on that altar.

What did Abraham believe that God could do?

He believed that God was both good and powerful—that if Isaac did die on that altar God could and would raise Isaac from the dead.

- **See Genesis 22:7-14. How was Abraham’s faith confirmed in this case?**

God stopped the offering and provided a ram to be the substitute sacrifice, to die in the place of Isaac.

Explain that this concept of an innocent animal dying as a substitute sacrifice for men and women is a very common and important concept throughout the

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Bible. Inform the student that we’ll talk more about it in some future events.

b. Read Genesis 22:15-18.

What promise do you see in verse 18?

Here God promised that all nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham’s offspring.

What is slightly different here, as compared to Genesis 12:3? Hint: Compare “in you…” with “in your seed…”

In Genesis 12:3 God told Abraham that all the peoples of the earth would be blessed through him (Abraham). But, in the later promise of Genesis 22:18, God indicates that the blessing that would come to all nations/people would not be something that he (Abraham) personally would realize through his own life. The special blessing would come through some group of his descendants or through someone from within that group.

Discuss: Don’t you imagine that Abraham was curious regarding what this special blessing would be and how it would become a reality?

c. Later, Isaac had a special son named Jacob (whom God renamed “*Israel*”) who had twelve sons.

Since we are not taking the time here to read the Bible passages that cover the remainder of Isaac’s life and the birth and life of Jacob, take a few minutes to give the student a brief overview of the later life of Isaac and how Jacob came to be Isaac’s special son through whom the “special blessing to all people” would come. Explain how God changed his heart and changed his name from “Jacob” (which means “schemer or trickster”) to “Israel” (which means “prince of God”).

As Israel was preparing to die, what promise did he make to his son Judah in the first few words of Genesis 49:10? Hint: A scepter is a staff held by a king as an emblem of royal authority.

First, ask the student if he/she has any idea what God was saying here. Then, build upon his/her response.

God predicted that the scepter (symbol of kingly authority) would reside in or among the offspring of Judah and that a lawgiver (another indication of a ruler) would descend from Judah. In the last phrase, God seems to predict that “the people” or “nations” would be ruled by this king and lawgiver.

Don’t comment much more about this, but encourage the student to remember this promise. It will come up again in some of the later events.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

How is God Portrayed in the Events on Pages 16-17?

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Moses’ Call to Leadership

- 13. After some of Abraham’s descendants (the Israelites) became slaves in Egypt, God called Moses to lead them out of Egypt and into Canaan, the land God earlier promised to Abraham. Exodus 1:1-14; Exodus 3:1-17**

- a. God directed circumstances in Israel’s family to place his son Joseph in Egypt as a prominent leader in order to prepare the way for Israel’s family to follow.**

Don’t go into too much detail, but take time here to give an overview of the story of Joseph. Focus on the major experiences that occurred in his life, resulting in his rise to power in Egypt.

- b. Read Exodus 1:1-7. In what ways does verse 7 describe the growth of Israel’s clan?**

“But the children of Israel ⁽¹⁾were fruitful and ⁽²⁾increased abundantly, ⁽³⁾multiplied and ⁽⁴⁾grew exceedingly mighty; and the ⁽⁵⁾land was filled with them.” (Exodus 1:7)

Notice the five ways in which the author of Exodus described the growth of Israel’s clan while they were in Egypt. It is no wonder that the Egyptians began to be concerned about the growing power base that this alien clan was amassing.

- c. Read Exodus 1:8-14. What happened after a new Egyptian Pharaoh (king) came to power—one who did not remember Israel’s son Joseph or the former Pharaoh’s promises to Israel?**

In an unsuccessful attempt to slow down the growth of this Israelite clan, the Egyptians began to subject them to harsh slave labor.

- d. Read Exodus 3:1-10.**

What task did God have in mind for Moses?

God wanted Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Even though Moses was an Israelite, he had been out of the country for about 40 years. He was uniquely qualified for this task because he had been reared in the royal palace in Egypt, as an adopted child. He was no doubt more educated than any other Israelite of his generation.

Note: You may want to give a brief overview of the life of Moses, from the time of his birth until God called him to lead Israel from Egypt.

What special relationship to the Israelites did God claim?

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Verse 6: God declared that He was “the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob (Israel).”

Verse 10: God declared that the children [offspring] of Israel were His (“My”) people.

Note: “Children of Israel” = the offspring of Israel (formerly named Jacob).

e. Read Exodus 3:11-17.

What was Moses supposed to tell the Israelites when they would ask him, “Who sent you?”

▪ From God’s instructions in verse 14?

God told Moses to tell the Israelites that “I AM” sent him.

Ask the student: “What do you think is the meaning or significance of God referring to Himself as the ‘I AM’?”

One student who went through this course responded by saying that “God just is.” That was a profound response. God had no beginning nor does He have an end. He wasn’t created. God “just is!” (in theological terms we call this God’s “eternal self-existence”)

▪ From God’s instructions in verse 15?

God also told Moses to tell the Israelites that the “LORD” God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was the One who sent Him.

“LORD” (when the word is found in all capital letters like this) is translated from a Hebrew word (“Yahweh or Jehovah”) which means essentially the same as “I AM.” It is the personal name for God. As we study through the Bible, we learn that there were many false gods and they all had personal names (Baal, for example). But the “LORD God” or “the LORD” is specifically the one and only true God, the Creator of heavens and earth—the God of the Bible!

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

The Plagues and Passover

- 14. To free the Israelites, God sent a series of plagues upon Egypt, including the death of the firstborn in every family, but God protected those who appropriately expressed faith in Him. Exodus 12:1-13, 21-23**
- a. To demonstrate His power over the false gods of Egypt and to convince Pharaoh to release the Israelites, God executed a series of dreadful plagues on Egypt. The tenth and final plague in that series involved the death of firstborn children and animals.**

Summarize the interactions between Moses and Pharaoh and the first nine plagues that resulted from Pharaoh’s refusal to release the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt. Explain how this was really a battle between the false pagan gods of the Egyptians and the true LORD Creator-God of the Israelites and the Bible.

For a good overview of the theological significance of this conflict and the plagues, read Unit VII (“Moses Leads Israel”) in *The Old Testament Story* course by Dr. David Brooks.

- b. Read Exodus 12:1-13, 21-23.**

- **What were the required characteristics of the animal to be sacrificed? See verse 5.**

“Your ⁽¹⁾lamb shall be ⁽²⁾without blemish, a ⁽³⁾male of ⁽⁴⁾the first year. You may take it ⁽⁵⁾from the sheep or from the goats.” (verse 5)

- **What were the Israelites supposed to do with the blood of this animal? See verses 7 and 22.**

They were supposed to take some of the blood and apply it (using a bunch of hyssop as a brush) to three places around the door: (1) on the left door post, (2) on the right door post, and (3) on the lintel—the horizontal beam or header over the top of the door of the house where they ate the roasted sacrificial lamb.

For some Bible study leaders, there will be a temptation to explain that these three points of blood application form a crude outline of a cross. Don’t go there, at this point.

- **What sign would cause God to pass over a home without executing the plague of death? See verses 12-13, 23.**

When the LORD God passed through the land of Egypt that night, if He saw

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

the blood of the slain lamb applied to the door of a house He passed over that house—He did not execute judgment on that household.

The application of the blood, as God prescribed, was an exercise of faith in the LORD God by the head of the household.

A good discussion question here would be: “When a person applied the blood of the sacrificial lamb as God prescribed, specifically what did he believe to be true of the LORD God?”

Some of the several correct responses:

- (1) That the LORD God is the true God.
- (2) That He provides people with the opportunity to avoid His judgment.
- (3) That He will be true to His promises and His word can be trusted.
- (4) That He will protect those who exercise the proper faith in Him.
- (5) That He is an all-powerful God and more powerful than the so-called gods of Egypt.

▪ **God established a memorial to remind the Israelites of this deliverance from death. What was this memorial to be called? See verse 27.**

God told the Israelites to tell their children that this memorial is the “Passover sacrifice of the LORD.” To this day, this Passover feast is observed each year by the descendants of Israel.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Israel’s Exodus from Egypt

15. Then Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt as God parted the waters of the Red Sea, preparing their way toward the promised land of Canaan. Exodus 14:1-31

a. Read Exodus 14:1-12.

What caused Israel’s boldness (in verse 8) to be so quickly turned to fear (in verse 10)?

As soon as the Israelites realized that Pharaoh and his army were drawing near to them, their boldness changed to fear.

b. According to verses 1-2 and verse 9 in Exodus 14, what was the name of the place where the Israelites camped?

They camped between Migdol and the Red Sea near Pi Hahiroth, before (opposite) Baal Zephon (or Zephon).

Find the probable location of that place on the map on page 8.

No one knows the exact location of these places for sure, but Pi Hahiroth was probably near the spot indicated on the map on page 8.

c. Read Exodus 14:13-14.

What expressions of faith in God do we see in the words of Moses?

Moses strongly believed that the LORD God who led them to this point would deliver them from harm at the hands of the Egyptians. He went so far as to say that “the Egyptians you see today you will never see again” and “the LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

d. As you read the remainder of the chapter, look for at least three major miraculous acts that God performed in order to make it possible for Israel to escape the Egyptians and to leave Egypt.

Read Exodus 14:15-31.

Identify and discuss the miracles that God performed.

(1) The pillar of cloud that had been leading the Israelites moved behind them, between the armies of Egypt and the Israelites. God caused it to be dark on one side of the cloud and light on the other side. The cloud kept the Egyptians from making contact with the Israelites.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

(2) The LORD divided the waters of the Red Sea and dried up the seabed to create a roadway for the Israelites to escape from the Egyptians.

(3) After the Egyptians crossed the Red Sea safely, the LORD closed the waters of the Red Sea to destroy the Egyptians who were pursuing them.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

The Ten Commandments

16. In the wilderness between Egypt and Canaan, God, the perfectly Holy One, gave the Israelites a set of laws which express His hatred for what we know as *sin*. Exodus 20:1-17

- a. God gave an extensive system of laws to the nation of Israel, but the core of that legal system was contained in what is often called the Ten Commandments.**

Read Exodus 20:1-17 and identify these ten foundational laws.

First (verse 3) = Don't put any other gods before the LORD God.

Because God is our Creator, He owns us and only He is worthy of our reverence and allegiance. Nothing in our lives should take precedence over the LORD God. That is particularly true of the false “gods” because they are not true gods at all.

If we put anything in our life above the LORD God, we have broken the first commandment.

Second (verses 4-6) = Don't worship idols.

The second commandment is somewhat similar to the first one, but it is not the same. Based upon the first commandment, we know that it is wrong to make some kind of a material image (idol) and to worship a false god through it. But, this commandment is broader than that. It is wrong to make an idol (material image) even if we might use it in an attempt to worship the true LORD God. The Creator LORD God of the Bible is a spirit being who cannot be reduced to a material image.

If we make any physical image and through it we attempt to worship a false god or even the true LORD God, we have broken the second commandment.

Third (verse 7) = Don't misuse the name of the LORD God.

To “take the name of the LORD God in vain” would be to use His holy name lightly or in jest, in a way that does not truly reverence Him or His name.

If we do that, we have broken the third commandment.

Fourth (verses 8-11) = Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

At the end of the creation week (event two on page 12), the Bible tells us

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

that God rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:1-3). God didn’t rest because He was tired, because our all-powerful God never tires. God “rested” on that day in order to set a precedent for men and women. God made us in such a way that we have a human need for regular periodic times of rest. In the first major part of the Bible (the Old Testament) God instituted a plan for the Israelites that required them to rest and focus uniquely on Him on the seventh day—called the “Sabbath.”

Although God’s plan for us has changed somewhat in the last major part of the Bible (the New Testament), God still desires for us to not abuse ourselves by failing to rest regularly and periodically.

If we do ignore God’s “rest” principle for our lives, we have violated an important routine that God has intended for our lives.

Fifth (verse 12) = Honor your father and your mother.

The God-established authority of parents over their children is a foundational principle of family life that has existed since the time of Adam and Eve. Because of the sinful nature that children inherit from their parents, and ultimately from Adam and Eve, all children (to one degree or another) sometimes resist this authority and dishonor their parents in the process.

When (as children) we dishonor our parents, we break the fifth commandment.

Sixth (verse 13) = Don’t commit murder.

The Hebrew word in this passage from which our English words “kill” or “murder” are translated suggests “premeditated murder,” and does not prohibit killing in honest self-defense.

The seriousness of murder is easy to understand when we recall that God made man and woman “in His own image.” Thus, an act of murder is, in a sense, an attack on God Himself.

Note: It is probably wise here to avoid discussions about war, capital punishment, and etc. Those are good questions that you should make note of and deal with later. But, at this point, these discussions may derail the main focus of the study.

In a later section of the Bible, we learn that even deep-seated hatred for other people is like murder.

When humans, acting on their own selfish impulses, take the life of another human being, they break the sixth commandment.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Seventh (verse 14) = Don’t commit adultery.

There are several sexual sins mentioned in the Bible, all of which are clearly defined as breaking God’s holy law. In this commandment, God focuses on the sin of adultery—sexual relations involving a married person with someone who is not his/her spouse.

In a later section of the Bible, we learn that it is a violation of God’s law to deeply desire to have sex with someone who is not your marriage partner even if the physical act is not consummated.

When humans enter into sexual relations with someone who is not his/her marriage partner, they break the seventh commandment.

Eighth (verse 15) = Don’t steal.

God makes it clear in the Bible that personal property should be respected by others.

When we take things to be our own that do not belong to us, we break the eighth commandment.

Ninth (verse 16) = Don’t bear false witness against others.

The principle in this commandment is simple—don’t be dishonest, don’t lie.

Anytime we speak dishonestly, in “big ways” or with “little white lies,” we break the ninth commandment.

Tenth (verse 17) = Don’t covet things that belong to others.

The tenth commandment extends the eighth commandment. Not only is it wrong to steal, it’s also wrong to strongly desire for ourselves the things that others have.

Anytime we covet what others have, we break the tenth commandment.

b. What do these laws reveal about the nature and character of God?

These laws reveal to us that God is holy, just, and fair.

At the time that these laws were given by the LORD God to the Israelites, they were unique.

The religious systems of the people who lived around the Israelites at that time did not have such a high set of moral laws to govern the people. Thus, the

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

immorality in those societies was completely unrestrained. Sexual sins, rebellion of children, dishonesty, theft, idol worship, murder and other forms of violence, were rampant.

All of this tends to be typical of societies that fail to recognize, revere, and obey the holy LORD God who is our Creator and Master.

c. In your culture, which of these laws are often violated?

The answer to this question will vary from one culture to the next, but in most cases participants in the study will respond, “all of them!” If there is one or two of these violations of God’s law that are prominent in the culture where you live, address those sins in more detail.

d. What do these laws reveal about the nature and character of mankind?

These ten commandments serve as a kind of measuring rod for humankind in general, and for us (as individuals) in particular. When we honestly evaluate our lives in light of these moral standards, everyone falls short to one degree or another.

e. How many of God’s laws would need to be broken for a person to be guilty of doing wrong—to have sinned? Think about Adam and Eve. See event 5 on page 14.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed the one law that God gave them, they died spiritually (became separated from their close relationship with the holy LORD God, their Creator). Because God is perfectly holy and sinless, it only took one act of disobedience for them to be out-of-sync with the LORD God’s holy character.

How is God Portrayed in the Events on Pages 18-19?

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Tabernacle in the Wilderness

17. God then directed Moses to build a portable place for worship where the Israelites could go to offer sacrifices and receive forgiveness of their sins. Exodus 40:17-34; Leviticus 1:1-4, 10

a. Read Exodus 40:17-34.

Compare what you read here to the tabernacle drawing on page 10.

Exodus 40:17-34 gives a brief description of the arrangement of the pieces of furniture in the tabernacle. The identification of a couple of the objects mentioned in this passage may not be obvious or clear.

The “Testimony” mentioned here refers to the two tablets of stone on which the Ten Commandments were written. They were a recorded testimony of God’s laws for His people. As verse 20 indicates, these stone tablets were placed inside the Ark of the Covenant.

The “table” in verse 22 was the table of bread. The golden altar was the small altar that was placed in front of the veil that separated the larger holy place from the holy of holies, where the ark was located.

The other objects mentioned in these verses should be easy to identify on the tabernacle drawing.

If this is a leader-guided study, the leader should be prepared to explain the functions and purposes of the major parts of the tabernacle.

Sixteen chapters in this book of the Bible (Exodus 25-40) are needed to describe the tabernacle completely. We encourage you to read and study these chapters in preparation for leading students through an overview of the tabernacle.

All total, more than 50 chapters in the Bible are dedicated to describing the tabernacle and its functions. It’s obvious that this was an important place during the era in which it was used.

It’s also very important to the study of *The Story of Hope*. It serves as a vivid object lesson to clarify how sinful men and women can freely receive God’s forgiveness of their sins.

All of the information that you need in order to be equipped to explain the tabernacle can be found on the following website, which we recommend very highly. We also recommend that you purchase *The Tabernacle* pamphlet and the Tabernacle Model Kit that are available on this site.

<http://www.the-tabernacle-place.com/>

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

If possible, use the tabernacle model to explain the features and functions of the tabernacle in this part of your study of *The Story of Hope*.

- c. **The tabernacle was a place of worship but also a place where a person’s sin could be atoned (covered or forgiven) by offering a sacrifice from his herd of cattle or goats, flock of sheep, or birds. The sacrificial animal would die as a substitute to atone for (cover or forgive) the person’s sin.**

The proper way to study the structure and furniture of the tabernacle is from the inside (where God dwelt) to the outside (where sinful men approached God with their sacrifices). As you lead the student through the study, begin with the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies, and then work outward in the study to the large bronze altar that was located just inside the courtyard gate.

Read Leviticus 1:1-4 and 10-14.

Summarize the procedure that was followed.

Focus on verses 1-4 and ask the student to summarize the procedure stated in these verses.

Emphasize the placement of the person’s hand on the head of the innocent animal and explain what was happening at that point—in God’s sight, the sin of the person offering the sacrifice was being transferred to the innocent animal that would then die as a substitute for the offerer’s sins.

- d. **What similarities do you see between what was done here and what happened in event 8 on page 15?**

The most obvious similarity is that innocent animals died because of the sin of human beings. In both cases, this plan was directed by God so that human beings could receive a very special benefit.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Bronze Serpent

18. On their way toward Canaan, the Israelites rebelled against God and were punished with deadly serpent bites, but God graciously provided a remedy for their afflictions. Numbers 21:4-9

a. Read Numbers 21:4-9 and identify each of the following parts of this story:

Give a brief background to this story. Explain how the Israelites failed to trust God at Kadesh Barnea (point this out on the map on page 8) and explain how they wandered in the Wilderness of Sinai for about 40 years. It was in this wilderness that the current event occurred.

▪ **Sin of unbelief and rebellion**

⁵ And the people spoke against God and against Moses: “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.”

▪ **Judgment**

⁶ So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.

▪ **Confession**

⁷ Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you;

▪ **Prayer for deliverance**

...pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

▪ **God’s provision**

⁸ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.”

▪ **Faith**

⁹ So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent,

▪ **Life**

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

...he lived.

b. What did an Israelite have to do in order to be saved from death?

He or she simply had to recognize his/her need and, by faith, look to the provision that God had given them. There was nothing magical about the bronze serpent (which is confirmed in another place in the Bible). It was the act of faith (trust or full reliance) in God that caused a dying person to be saved.

c. Keep this event in your mind because, later in the Bible’s unfolding story, a very important teacher will refer back to it and will explain the prophetic significance of this event.

Don’t get ahead of the story by saying any more at this point.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Reign of King David

- 19. After the Israelites entered Canaan, God ruled them through a series of judges and then kings, including King David whose kingdom God promised would endure forever through one special descendant. 2 Samuel 7:1-16**

A few hundred years separate this event from the previous one (event 18). Give a brief overview of what occurred during that time.

Use the map on pages 8 (first to give a geographical overview) and 7 (then to zoom in on Canaan) to explain how the Israelites made their way to a place on the east side of the Jordan River, across from Jericho.

Explain how the Israelites (under the leadership of Joshua) miraculously crossed the Jordan River, captured Jericho first and then eventually captured all major areas of Canaan. Go back to point c. in event 11 (page 17 of *The Story of Hope* to review where God promised to Abraham that this would happen).

Explain that God and the Israelites were not displacing innocent people. The people who lived in Canaan (“Canaanites”) had been living unbelievably wicked lifestyles for centuries (even burning their children as living sacrifices) and this conquest of their land was God’s just judgment for their sinfulness. It was only God’s grace that had delayed His judgment!

a. Israel was ruled in Canaan by several judges then later by a series of kings.

Give a very brief explanation of the period of the judges:

- (1) The Israelites began to live like the wicked people they had displaced.
- (2) Then, as judgment for their sin, conquering groups of people subdued them and ruled them for various periods of years.
- (3) Then, they always cried out to the LORD their God and asked Him to help with their predicaments.
- (4) Then, many times God raised up leaders (“judges”) from among the Israelites who rallied them and led them to defeat their conquerors.
- (5) Then, the whole cycle happened over and over again.

David, the second king, was the greatest and godliest of them all.

Explain after a few hundred years of being ruled by these judges, the Israelites asked God to give them a king and a man named “Saul” was appointed as their first king. Then later, God raised up David as king.

Read 2 Samuel 7:1-7.

What kind of *house* did David want to build for God?

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

To this point, there had been no permanent temple where people could go to worship the LORD God. The ark of the covenant, where God came down to dwell with his people, had been “housed” in a portable tent-tabernacle that had moved from place to place for many years. Even in King David’s era, there was no temple for God to meet with His people even though David was dwelling in a beautiful palace. Here, God asked King David to build a temple where people could worship Him—the LORD God.

Note: David gathered materials and made plans for a magnificent temple in Jerusalem, which was built later by his son, King Solomon.

- b. Be aware that *house* sometimes also refers to a person’s descendants or lineage.**

Explain that the word “house” is used here in two different ways—it’s what we sometimes call a “play on a word.”

Read the last part of 2 Samuel 7:11 through verse 13.

What kind of *house* did God promise to establish for David?

In the culture of that time and place a “house” was a way of referring to a **royal dynasty**—a sequence of powerful leaders in the same family. Thus, God promised King David that a series of powerful rulers (kings) would descend from him and would rule in his place long after he died.

In some countries, it is still used that way—the “house of Windsor” for example (in the United Kingdom).

- c. Read 2 Samuel 7:16.**

What indication do we have that this “house-promise” extends well beyond his son Solomon’s reign?

The LORD God said that David’s house and David’s throne would be established forever! We know from history that Solomon only ruled for 40 years.

- d. Guess which Israelite tribe David was from. Hint: Remember Jacob’s promise to Judah in Genesis 49:10. See event 12 on page 17.**

King David was from the tribe of Judah.

Remind the student that Abraham’s grandson, Jacob (whose name was changed to “Israel”), had twelve sons. When Israel’s descendants were formed into a nation, each of his sons became the head of a tribe. Just before Israel (the man) died, he made a prediction regarding each of his sons and their tribes.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Genesis 49:10 records the prediction that Israel made concerning the tribe named after his son Judah.

Discuss this with the student—the connection between Genesis 49:10 and the promise that God made to King David regarding an everlasting royal dynasty.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Prophecies of a Coming Messiah

20. Throughout the history of the Israelites, God inspired His prophets to foretell many details concerning a special Israelite, a King and Savior, who would be born at some future time. Isaiah 7:14; 9:1-2, 6-7; 52:13—53:12

a. His birth: Read Isaiah 7:14.

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

Re-read Genesis 3:15 and recall that the promised conqueror of Satan was said to be the offspring of the woman, but no mention was made of a father. See event 7 on page 15.

¹⁵ And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.

What possible connection do you see between these two verses?

There are some difficult interpretive issues related to both of these passages, so don’t press this possible connection too strongly.

It would be accurate to say:

(1) The Satan-Conqueror promised in **Genesis 3:15** would be the “Seed” (or offspring) of the woman. No mention is made of a father. Perhaps this was a hint that this Satan-Conqueror would be born through a miraculous virgin birth.

(2) In **Isaiah 7:14** God’s prophet Isaiah promised a sign to the Israelites—a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son. The name of this virgin-born Son would be “Immanuel,” which literally means “God with us.”

(3) These two prophetic promises were possibly referring to one and the same person. Many evangelical Bible scholars do believe that there is a connection between these two verses.

b. His birthplace: Read Micah 5:2.

²“ But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be Ruler in Israel,

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Whose goings forth *are* from of old,
From everlasting.”

Explain to the student that “Bethlehem Ephrathah” was a small town located in the area of Canaan that was possessed by the Israelite tribe of Judah. Locate it (Bethlehem) on the map on page 7.

How does this verse relate to the scepter promise that Israel made to his son Judah in Genesis 49:10? See event 12 on page 17.

Near the time of his death, Israel (the man) predicted that a kingly ruler and lawgiver would come from the descendants of Judah and that “the people” or “nations” would obey this king.

In the previous event (event 19) we saw that (1) David was a king from the tribe of Judah* and that (2) God promised a royal dynasty of kings would descend from David.

*Note: David was from the town of Bethlehem.

Micah is writing about 300 years after the time of King David. He seems to predict that another Israelite Ruler would come from Bethlehem. But then Micah adds something unique about this future Ruler—His “goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”

What could that mean? Hold that thought!

c. His ministry in Galilee: Read Isaiah 9:1-2 & 6.

Note that this area was near the Sea of Galilee.

Locate this area on the map on page 7. Notice that it includes the towns of Capernaum, Bethesda, and Nazareth.

Explain that the area around Galilee was repeatedly oppressed by the enemies of the Israelites a couple of hundred years or so after King David died. Many of them were taken away as captives. Non-Israelites (“Gentiles”) were brought into the area to replace the Israelites who were removed as captives. Thus, the area had a long dark history of oppression.

A child would be born (a son given) who would bring light to this area.

d. His death: Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

What bad things would be done to the man described here...?

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Here are a few of them:

52:14 -- His visage (appearance) and form would be marred more than any man had experienced.

53:2 – He would have no form or comeliness (attractive features) or beauty that would cause people to be attracted to him.

53:3 – He would be despised and rejected; people would hide their faces from him

53:4 – He would be smitten by God and afflicted

53:5 – He would be wounded and bruised

53:7 – He would be oppressed and afflicted; he would be led like a lamb to the slaughter

53:8 – He would be cut off from the land of the living (killed!)

What good things would result from his sufferings?

Here are a few of them:

52:15 – He would “sprinkle many nations” (Just ask rhetorically—What could that mean?)

53:5 – His wounds and bruises would be for us—He would take the punishment that we deserve.

53:6 – God would place our sin (iniquity) on him, in a similar way to what was described in event 17 on page 20.

53:11 – Through him (here called “God’s [My] Righteous Servant”) many would be “justified” because he bore (carried) their sins

53:12 – God would count him as “great” because of the noble thing he would do—die for the sins of many sinners (transgressors).

e. His resurrection from death: Read Psalm 16:8-10.

What does verse 10 indicate?

The first part of the verse (“For you will not leave my soul in Sheol (the grave)”) seems to be referring to the immaterial part of this man (his spirit or soul).

The second part of the verse (“Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

corruption.”) seems to indicate that this man’s body would not decay in the grave.

f. His eternal kingdom: Read Isaiah 9:6-7.

Verse 7 indicates that the Messiah will sit upon the throne of David and over His kingdom. He will establish His kingdom with judgment and justice, forever!

You may want to remind the student of the promise in event 19 (page 21) that God made to King David.

How is God Portrayed in the Events on Pages 20-21?

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Birth of Jesus of Nazareth

21. At God’s appointed time, He sent His Son to Earth, born of a virgin named Mary, as the special King and Savior that He had promised for centuries. Matthew 1:1-2, 18-25; Luke 2:1-14

a. Read the beginning of the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1:1-2.

What special things do you remember about these ancestors of Jesus?

Abraham > Isaac > Jacob (“Israel”) > Judah

Abraham = See event 11 on page 17.

God called Abraham from Ur of Chaldea. He went with his father (Terah) to Haran, where they stopped to live. After Terah died, Abraham moved on into Canaan, the land that God promised to give to his descendants.

God promised Abraham that all of the families of the earth would be blessed through him and his descendants.

Isaac = See event 12 on page 17.

Isaac was a special miracle son that God gave to Abraham and his wife Sarah in their old age. God tested Abraham’s faith by asking him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. God stopped Abraham from doing this and provided a substitute sacrifice (a ram) to die in Isaac’s place. The Bible tells us that Abraham believed, from the very beginning of that event, that Isaac would return alive with him. He believed that God was good and that God had the power even to raise his son from the dead, if necessary.

The blessings for all of the families of the earth that God promised to Abraham would come through Abraham’s son Isaac.

Jacob (“Israel”) = See event 12 (point c.) on page 17.

One of Isaac’s sons was Jacob, whose name was changed to “Israel” (prince of God) after he committed his life to God. Jacob/Israel had twelve sons. God worked things out so that Joseph, a special son of Israel, would become a ruler in the country of Egypt. It was in Egypt that Israel’s family grew into a very large clan.

Judah = See event 12 (point c.) on page 17. Also, see event 19 on page 21 and event 20 (point b.) on page 21.

As he neared death, Israel (the man) made predictions regarding all of his sons and the tribes that would descend through them. To one of Israel’s sons, Judah,

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

the LORD God predicted that a “scepter” (rod used by a king) would not depart from Judah’s tribe and that nations would obey the ruler who carried that scepter.

b. Read Matthew 1:18-25.

What indications do we see here that Jesus was a unique child? Hints: the way He was conceived and His names *Jesus* and *Immanuel*.

(1) Jesus was not conceived in Mary by a human husband. She was a virgin when Jesus was conceived in her; it was a supernatural spiritual work of God.

(2) God sent an angel to Joseph (to whom Mary was engaged) and told him that the child that Mary would give birth to would be called “Jesus,” which means “Jehovah (the LORD) is Savior.” Other children at this time were named “Jesus,” but the angel told Joseph that this child born to Mary would be true to His name—“He will save his people from their sins.”

(3) The angel also proclaimed that this child would be called “Immanuel” which means “God with us.”

c. Read Luke 2:1-7 and compare these events to the prophecy of Micah 5:2. See event 20 on page 21.

Mary, the mother of Jesus and the man to whom she was engaged (Joseph) lived in Nazareth. Locate Nazareth on the map on page 7.

Even though they lived in Nazareth at the time, Joseph and Mary were both from the tribe of Judah and were both descendants of King David. For that reason, they were required to go to Bethlehem (where David was born and grew up), in the area of Canaan set aside for the tribe of Judah, in order to report for the census that the Roman Caesar Augustus issued at this time. The journey from Nazareth was about 70 miles (113 kilometers). Locate Bethlehem on the map on page 7.

Review point b. of event 20 on page 21 in *The Story of Hope*.

In Micah 5:2, about 700 years before the birth of Mary’s son Jesus, God’s prophet Micah predicted that a special future Ruler would come from Bethlehem, (even though this was a small town in the land of Judah) and that this Ruler would be “from of old, from everlasting.”

Don’t comment in detail on this. Just let the thought sink in for now because it will be clarified later in the study.

d. Read Luke 2:8-14.

Jesus was described as “a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” What do the words *Savior*, *Christ*, and *Lord* indicate? Hint: *Christ* is the Greek

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

equivalent of the Hebrew word *Messiah* (one anointed to be king).

Savior = one who saves (could be used for various types of “saving,” physically or spiritually)

Christ = translated here from a Greek word; it means the same thing as a Hebrew (language the Israelites spoke) word that meant “Messiah” or “Anointed One.” The Israelites believed that God would send a Messiah (One Anointed by the LORD God) who would be their King.

Lord = master or one to be served; it was often used by those who wrote the Bible to refer to the Creator God (LORD) of the Bible

All together, these words indicate that Mary’s son would be very special—He would be the Messiah (Anointed King) of His people, the Israelites. He would be their Master and would, in some sense, “save them.”

- e. At the bottom of each of the following double-page spreads on pages 22-31, put a mark beside the ways Jesus is portrayed in the four events on the two pages.**

Notice the change of characteristics at the bottom of this double-page spread (on pages 22-23). Previously, we looked for characteristics (attributes) of God that we saw displayed in the events that we had just previously studied.

For the next 20 events on pages 22-31, we want to look for characteristics of this Jesus, who was sometimes called “Jesus of Nazareth” (because that is where He grew up) and is now more commonly called “Jesus Christ.”

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

John the Baptist’s Proclamation

22. God’s prophet, John the Baptist, announced that Jesus of Nazareth was the special King and Savior, God’s Lamb, who would take away the sin of the world. John 1:29-34

a. Jesus grew up in Nazareth where Joseph, His earthly father, worked as a carpenter.

On the map on page 7, point out the location of Nazareth and it’s relation to the Jordan River where John the Baptist ministered.

b. At about the age of 30, Jesus began a public ministry. At that time, a popular prophet named John (John the Baptist) was preaching about the coming Messiah and was baptizing repentant people in the Jordan River.

You may want to point to John the Baptist in the picture for event 22 on page 22 and give a brief overview of the kind of rugged man that he was, etc.

c. Read John 1:29.

Remember what we have studied about sacrificial lambs taking away sins? See event 17 on page 20.

Turn back to event 17 on page 20 and ask the student to review with you what he/she remembers about the sacrifices that took place at the bronze altar near the front gate of the tabernacle.

Fill in any gaps in his/her memory, especially related to the characteristics of the animals that were offered and the process through which the sins of the offerer were transferred to the sacrificial animal. Review and re-explain how the animal took the place of the offerer on the altar and how the offerer’s sin penalty was paid.

What do you think John meant by this “*Lamb of God*” proclamation?

Be sure to give the student the opportunity to answer this question. This is one of the most important points in the study of *The Story of Hope*. Spend as much time as is necessary to discuss and clarify the answer to this question.

John the Baptist was proclaiming that Jesus was the One whom God sent to die for us, in order that our sins could be forgiven. Just like the lambs we read about earlier in our study died for the people who offered them at the bronze altar of the tabernacle, Jesus was sent as God’s provision for the “sin of the [entire] world.”

Explain that we’ll see exactly how that this all works out, later in this study.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

- d. Remember the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 and 22:18? See events 11 and 12 on page 17.

Go back to events 11 & 12 on pages in *The Story of Hope* and review this promise made in Genesis 12:3 and repeated in Genesis 22:15-18.

The LORD God promised to bless all of the nations of the earth through Abraham and his descendants.

Jesus was a descendant of Abraham. What is the connection between Jesus and the promise to Abraham?

Ask the student if he/she has any idea what the connection is between the promise that God made to Abraham and his descendants and this proclamation of John the Baptist that Jesus was the “Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world.”

If necessary, ask: “If Jesus could do something that would take away the sin of the world—people from all nations—wouldn’t that be a great blessing to them?” Discuss but don’t get into the details of how this would happen. That will come later in the study.

- e. Read John 1:30-34.

What other special things do we learn about Jesus?

(1) Even though John the Baptist was a great prophet sent from God, he declared that Jesus was “preferred before me [him—John].”

(2) Even though John the Baptist was a few months older than Jesus, he declared that “He [Jesus] was before me.” What could that mean? Briefly discuss. It suggests that, in some sense, Jesus existed before John the Baptist existed.

(3) John the Baptist had seen God’s Holy Spirit descend from heaven, like a dove, and rest upon Jesus.

(4) John testified that Jesus was “the Son of God.”

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Temptations by Satan

- 23. At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus was personally tested by Satan but resisted Satan’s temptations with statements from God’s Word in the Old Testament. Matthew 4:1-11**

At this point in the study, you have probably already explained that the “Old Testament” is the first major part of the Bible. At the time that Jesus lived on this earth, the Old Testament had already been written and Jesus knew it very, very well.

- a. In order to verify that Jesus was truly the unique person that John the Baptist declared Him to be, God’s Spirit led Him into the desert where He faced a grueling series of temptations by the ultimate tempter—Satan.**

Remind the student how persuasive Satan was when he tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden. Introduce the study of this event by saying, “Let’s compare how Jesus responded to Satan’s temptations with the way in which Eve responded many centuries earlier.”

- b. Read Matthew 4:1-4.**

How would you summarize the nature of Jesus’ first temptation?

Jesus was very hungry because He had fasted for 40 days and nights. Explain what the spiritual discipline of “fasting” is—abstaining from eating in order to devote oneself to focusing on communion with God.

Satan tempted Jesus to create bread out of stones and to break his fast by satisfying the hunger of his body.

How did He respond?

Jesus quoted a verse from the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 8:3) to inform Satan that there are things that are more important than the food that satisfies our physical hunger—the words from God recorded in the Bible that satisfy our spiritual needs.

- c. Read Matthew 4:5-7.**

How would you summarize the nature of Jesus’ second temptation?

Satan took Jesus to the top of the temple in Jerusalem and challenged Him to prove that He was the Son of God by leaping off the temple so that God’s angels would rush to catch Him.

How did He respond?

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Again, Jesus quoted from God’s words in the Old Testament (Psalm 91:11, 12 and Deuteronomy 6:16). He rebuked Satan for trying to tempt “the LORD your God”—for trying to force God to respond to his (Satan’s) demands.

d. Read Matthew 4:8-11.

How would you summarize the nature of Jesus’ third temptation?

Satan took Jesus up on an exceedingly high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. He promised Jesus that he (Satan) would give Him (Jesus) all of those kingdoms if Jesus would fall down and worship him.

How did He respond?

This time He rebuked Satan strongly and told him to “get away!” Jesus then quoted from a verse in the Old Testament where Moses said to the people of Israel, “Worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.” (Deuteronomy 6:13)

e. How does Jesus’ response to Satan’s temptations differ from Eve’s? See event 5 on page 15.

- (1) Eve yielded; Jesus resisted.
- (2) Eve was lead to doubt God’s Word; Jesus cited it with confidence.
- (3) Eve’s disobedience to God showed her weakness; Jesus’ obedience to God revealed His spiritual strength.

f. What words come to mind when you read about the way Jesus resisted Satan’s temptations?

Ask for the student to share the words that come to his/her mind.

There are many possible good responses to this question. Here are a few:

Strong – bold – resistant – courageous – faithful – determined – etc.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Miracles of Jesus

24. Out of compassion for hurting people and to demonstrate His divine power, Jesus healed the sick and disabled, cast out demons, and even raised people from the dead. Matthew 4:23-24; John 11:1-45

a. To demonstrate that He truly was “the Son of God,” as John had said, Jesus performed many miracles.

At a few key periods in human history, God gave certain people the ability to perform miracles. In order to validate the God-appointed leadership of Moses and to demonstrate the LORD God’s power over the false gods of Egypt, God gave Moses miraculous powers.

Only a few other of God’s prophets in the Bible had these kinds of miracle-working powers. Those who did were God’s spokesmen who ministered in some unusually desperate times of spiritual darkness or key transitional points in human history.

When Jesus began His ministry at about age 30, He already had quite a reputation to live up to. From before His birth, the angel of God announced that He was “Immanuel,” which means “God with us.” John the Baptist proclaimed publicly that Jesus was “the Lamb of God” and “the Son of God.” In order to demonstrate His unique relationship to God, Jesus performed many miracles during his ministry on earth.

b. Read Matthew 4:23-24.

What specific types of miracles did Jesus perform in this early ministry tour of the Galilee region?

Locate the area of Galilee on the map on page 7.

He healed “all kinds of sicknesses and all kinds of disease” (not just the most simple and curable types).

He healed those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics.

Some of these were very “overt” (easy to be seen) disorders, so when Jesus healed people of these, everyone could see the results of His healing powers.

c. Read John 11:1-4.

According to Jesus, what was the ultimate purpose for Lazarus’ sickness?

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

“This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” (verse 4)

d. Read John 11:5-16.

What did Jesus know that His disciples did not know?

Until Jesus told them otherwise, the disciples thought that Lazarus was only sleeping in the sense of temporarily resting. They did not know that Lazarus was dead.

e. Read John 11:17-27.

What did Jesus ask Martha regarding her belief in Him?

He told her that He was the “resurrection and the life” and that those who believe in Him may die (physically) but that they will live again. He added that those who believe in Him will never die (spiritually). See verses 25-26.

Jesus was promising eternal life to those who genuinely believe (put their trust) in Him.

What was Martha’s response?

“Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.” (verse 27)

By this statement, Mary was saying that she believed that Jesus was the special King of the Israelites that had been promised for many centuries and that He was “the Son of God.”

f. Read John 11:28-46 and pay special attention to verses 40-45.

In what positive way did many of the Jews, who witnessed this miracle, respond?

But “many of the Jews who...had seen the things that Jesus did, believed in Him.” (verse 45)

Note: The *Jews* of the New Testament were basically the same people as the *Israelites* of the Old Testament.

It is important here to clarify who the *Jews* were (and are) because they will be mentioned often in some of the subsequent events in the study.

Bible scholars know that there some differences between the terms *Jews* and *Israelites*—they are not perfect synonyms. But avoid any attempts here to make the fine distinction between the two terms. The important fact to clarify is that

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

there is continuity between the *Israelites* of the Old Testament and the *Jews* of the New Testament.

How is Jesus Portrayed in the Events on Pages 22-23?

If necessary, review with the student the instructions in point e. of event 21 (“Birth of Jesus of Nazareth” on top of page 22 in *The Story of Hope*).

For example, ask:

“Did we see Jesus portrayed as a Humble Human Being in either of these events?”

Allow the student to share his thoughts and then you can share some additional ones.

“Did we see Jesus portrayed as a Sinless Man in either of these events?” Discuss.

“Did we see Jesus portrayed as God in Human Flesh in either of these events?”

Discuss.

Etc...until all 14 characteristics of Jesus have been covered.

Don’t think that you (and the student) need to find all 14 characteristics in the four events on any of the double-page spreads.

Remember the purpose of these “bottom of the double-page spread” activities—to help the student learn about Jesus, who He is and what He did, as the student reads and studies the Bible.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Encounter with a Religious Leader

25. On one occasion, Jesus told a prominent religious leader that he needed to experience a spiritual birth in order to enter God’s kingdom. John 3:1-18

a. Read John 3:1-4.

How did Nicodemus interpret Jesus’ statement about being “*born again*”?

He thought that Jesus was talking about going through the process of physical birth again—being born again from the mother’s womb. And that sounded impossible to him.

b. Read John 3:5-8.

What kind of rebirth was Jesus talking about?

Jesus clarified that He was speaking about a spiritual (not a physical) new birth.

Note: Many Bible scholars believe that the phrase “born of water” in verse 5 is speaking about the water that is associated with the physical birthing process.

c. What do you think Jesus meant when He talked about the need to be born again by the Spirit? Hint: Go back to John chapter 1 and read verses 10-13. He refers to Jesus.

In John 1:10-13, the writer is writing about Jesus.

Being born is the process by which we initially enter into a human family. Jesus came into the world but was rejected by many of His own Jewish people. But those who did genuinely believe in Him and receive Him (by faith) were given the right to become members of God’s family—children of God.

This process of being born into God’s family is not a physical (blood relationship, human flesh, will of man) kind of birth. It is a God-kind-of-birth, a spiritual process by which we become members of God’s family. This is the very thing that Jesus explained to Nicodemus two chapters later.

d. Review the Israelites’ experiences with the bronze serpent in Numbers 21:4-9 (see event 18 on page 20).

Go back in *The Story of Hope* to that event and see if the student can summarize what happened.

Now read John 3:14. Note: “Son of Man” is a common reference to Jesus.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Based upon what we know about the Israelites’ experiences, what do you think Jesus was predicting would happen to Him?

Give the student an opportunity to see if he/she can connect the bronze serpent event to what might happen to Jesus. But don’t explain the details of what would happen to Jesus. Explain to the student that we’ll learn more about this later in our study.

e. Read John 3:15-18.

Summarize the main idea in these verses.

In Numbers 21 the Israelites who looked to the bronze serpent, with faith in God, were saved from physical death.

Even better than that, God loved us enough that He sent His Son Jesus into this world so that we might not perish spiritually but have everlasting life. To receive this eternal life we must genuinely believe (trust) in Jesus. Those who are not trusting in Jesus now are already living under the condemnation (judgment) of God.

Spend as much time discussing this as is necessary, especially if the student is expressing an interest in these concepts.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Encounter with a Samaritan Woman

26. On another occasion, Jesus explained to a woman of Samaria how God could permanently satisfy her spiritual thirst. John 4:3-42

a. In Jesus’ day, people from Samaria were looked down upon and even hated by most Jewish people. Jews were forbidden by their religious leaders to even talk with them. They were considered to be religiously unclean.

Locate Samaria on the map on page 7.

Explain that the Samaritans had a mixed racial background—they were partly Jewish and partly non-Jewish. Several centuries earlier, the foreign political powers who ruled over that area at the time brought many foreigners into Samaria (where Israelites lived) in order to produce a mixed race of people.

With that in mind, read John 4:3-9.

Trace, on the map on page 7, the route that Jesus and His disciples probably followed as they went from Judah to Galilee, passing through Samaria. Explain that most Jews completely by-passed Samaria by travelling along the east banks of the Jordan River.

Explain what a “radical” (as viewed by the Jews of that time) thing this was that Jesus did. But by doing so, Jesus was demonstrating that He loved all people of all racial backgrounds and ethnic groups.

b. Read John 4:10-15.

What kind of *water* was the woman thinking of and how did that differ from the *water* that Jesus was talking about?

Jesus spoke about “spiritual water” that would quench the woman’s spiritual thirst forever. The woman thought that Jesus was speaking about the literal water that was in the well in front of them.

Point out the similarity between the misunderstanding of Nicodemus and the misunderstanding of this woman from Samaria. When Jesus spoke of things that were spiritual, they immediately thought of physical things. Jesus no doubt did this intentionally to get their attention so that He could explain spiritual processes to them.

You may want to explain that the metaphor of “water” (spiritual or living water) is used several times in the Bible. Apart from God, we find ourselves having a spiritual thirst—a realization that something important is missing from our lives. When we, by faith, invite Jesus Christ, the Son of God, into our lives He quenches that spiritual thirst—He gives us a sense of peace and personal

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

satisfaction that was missing prior to this important faith response.

c. Read John 4:16-18.

What do we learn here about this woman’s life?

This Samaritan woman had been married five times and was living out of wedlock with another man. Apparently, her life had been characterized by numerous dysfunctional relationships with men.

Notice that Jesus did not condemn her, even though His teachings in other places make it clear that He did not condone her lifestyle.

You may have students in this study whose lifestyles are similar to this woman’s. If so, just let the story speak for itself and don’t condemn them. Love them just as Jesus did.

d. Read John 4:19-26.

What information, about Himself, did Jesus reveal to her?

Jesus revealed to her that He was the Messiah (Christ) that the Jewish prophets had been writing about for centuries.

As a Samaritan (of mixed Jewish & non-Jewish heritage) the woman had enough Jewish tradition in her background that she was aware of some of the Old Testament’s teachings.

e. Read John 4:28-29. How could Jesus know so much about this woman’s life, since He had never met her before and was new to that area?

Depending upon the student’s background knowledge of the Bible, this may or may not be a difficult question. But let the student wrestle with it. If he/she does not yet realize that Jesus is God (that comes up two events later in the study), avoid the temptation to answer this question at this point. Simply explain that “we will soon learn the answer to this question.”

f. Read John 4:30, 39-42.

How did other Samaritans respond to Jesus and what did they conclude?

Many of them believed in Him, that He was indeed “the Christ, the Savior of the world.”

According to what we studied in the previous event (in John 1:10-13), by believing in Him as they did, these Samaritans were probably born again at this time—born spiritually into God’s family.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Teachings about Hell

27. As He moved among the people, Jesus often lovingly but sternly warned unbelievers of the reality of eternal punishment in Hell and the urgent need to escape it. Mark 9:42-48; Luke 16:19-31

In our modern world, Christians sometimes are embarrassed by the Bible’s teachings about Hell. It isn’t a concept that is “politically correct” in our age. As you approach this topic in the study, here are few things to keep in mind:

(1) Don’t allow yourself to approach the subject defensively. Just teach what the Bible clearly says about Hell, and do so with confidence.

(2) Be sure to present the subject with tender compassion and not with an uncaring judgmental spirit.

(3) You may want to preface this discussion with a reminder that two of God’s attributes (characteristics) are (a) holiness and (b) justice.

(a) If we could comprehend how greatly our sin offends the **holy LORD God**, we would be amazed that all of us are not already experiencing God’s wrath for our sins. And we would understand that the penalty for sin that God has established is not too harsh for anyone who has offended His infinite holiness.

(b) Then, if we think about the fact that **God is perfectly just** (He does what is just and fair) we would realize that God would be just and fair if He chose to punish all of us, right now, for our sins. We have all broken the Creator LORD God’s laws—we are all guilty. It’s only by God’s love and mercy that we are not already experiencing God’s just penalty for our sins.

a. In an earlier lesson (event 4 on page 13), we learned that an everlasting fire was created for the punishment of the Devil and his angels. Read Matthew 25:41.

Jesus warned those who follow Satan that they, too, will experience that same eternal punishment.

Explain that Jesus spoke more about this place called “Hell” than any other person in the Bible. Why? Because, as the Son of God, Jesus knew about the realities of Hell more clearly than anyone who had ever lived. Out of compassion for people just like us, Jesus lovingly but sternly warned them to choose God’s way of escaping Hell.

b. Read Mark 9:42-48.

What phrase did Jesus use in verse 48 to describe vividly what Hell is like?

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

“The fire is not quenched.” (This phrase is used five times in this passage in some translations, but just once or twice in some others, depending on which Greek manuscripts the translation is based on.)

Some people (even Bible-believing scholars) think that “fire” was only intended to be a metaphor to describe the severity of God’s eternal judgment for our sins. Don’t let that issue be a “story-stopper” for the study.

While we believe that the “fire” of Hell is and will be literal fire, the most important thing for an unbeliever to realize is that there is a very severe, everlasting, conscious punishment awaiting him/her, beyond the grave, if he or she does not choose to avoid it as provided for in God’s wonderful story of hope.

Note: See the Supplemental Information below for additional thoughts on this passage.

c. Jesus once told about a man who died and went to Hell (Hades).

There is some disagreement, among Bible scholars, regarding whether this was an actual true story of people who lived or it was a parable. Present it as a story that Jesus told and avoid any technical “parable vs. true story” discussion. The lessons we learn from the story isn’t affected by the nature of the story.

Note: Jesus does use personal names in the story, which would seem to indicate that He was telling a true story about real people.

Read Luke 16:19-31.

According to what Jesus taught...

▪ **True** or False? *Hell is a place of conscious suffering.*

Let the student discover and state this answer. Ask him/her about the basis for the answer—where in the story is the answer indicated. Discuss this as much as is needed.

▪ True or **False**? *Once people are in Hell, they can escape.*

Follow the same procedure as mentioned above. Discuss the implications of this.

Supplemental Information

Is the fire only a metaphor? Some would say that the idea of being burned alive is the most horrific experience that a human can imagine, so for that reason, God chose to

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

use fire as a metaphor to describe what it will be like to be separated from Him eternally.

But, the fact that “fire” is used in numerous places in the Bible to describe Hell, would seem to suggest that it is and will be more than a metaphor—that Hell is and will be a place of literal fire. There are more than 20 references to the fires of Hell in the New Testament alone, and most of these are found in statements made by Jesus, the all-knowing Son of God who is the Creator of Hell.

“Their worm does not die”—what does that mean? This phrase first appears in the last verse of the book of Isaiah (Isaiah 66:24). In that context, Isaiah was looking ahead to the last two events in *The Story of Hope*—the eternal state of believers (in verses 22-23) and the eternal state of unbelievers (in verse 24).

The “worm” mentioned here was probably a reference to maggots that infested pieces of flesh at a garbage dump site. When the garbage was burned, the maggots burned up too. In contrast, in Hell the flames of fire will not consume those who are sent there for eternal punishment.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Claims of Oneness with God

- 28. Several times when Jesus declared that He was equal to and one with God, some people were greatly offended and attempted to kill Him. John 5:16-18; John 8:48-59; John 10:22-33**

This is certainly a key topic in the story, because the entire story hinges upon the issue of “who is Jesus?”

The “trinity” concepts are difficult to understand for people who are just beginning to study the Bible and investigate Christianity. It’s probably best not to mention the word “trinity” (since it is a theological term not found in the Bible) but rather explain the concepts as simply as possible. Also, explain to the student that there are many truths about God that our limited human minds cannot fathom entirely, and this is one of them.

See the [Supplemental Information](#) (below) for some assistance as to how to deal with this topic.

- a. For a *mere man* to claim to be God or equal to Him was one form of blasphemy. The Old Testament penalty for blasphemy was death by stoning.**

Explain: From what we have learned in this study about the characteristics of God, we can understand what a seemingly audacious claim it would be for someone to claim to be equal to and one with God.

- b. Read John 5:16-18.**

True or False? *By asserting that God was His Father, Jesus was acknowledging that He was of the same essential (and equal) nature as God.*

Optional: In case there is some doubt about what Jesus was asserting in this passage, you might want to ask: “What does Jesus say in this passage to acknowledge that He had a unique relationship with God?”

(1) When these Jews sought to kill Him “all the more” because He “said that God was His Father,” Jesus did not try to deny that He had claimed that God was His Father. (verses 18-19)

(2) He claimed that He and God “the Father” had a special co-working relationship. (verses 17, 19-20)

(3) He claimed that, just like the Father raised the dead, He (Jesus) has the power to give life to whom He will. (verse 21)

(4) He claimed that the Father has committed to Him (Jesus, the Son) all judgment, “that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father.” (verses 22-23)

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

(5) He claimed that the Father had sent Him (Jesus). (verse 23)

Read John 8:48-59.

At the very beginning of our study, we learned that God is eternal—from everlasting to everlasting.

What did Jesus reveal about Himself here?

Abraham lived approximately 2,000 years before Jesus was born. That’s roughly the same amount of time between the time that Jesus lived on this earth and our current era.

In verse 58, Jesus clearly stated that “before Abraham was, I AM.” He certainly claimed to have existed before Abraham did. But the words “I AM” indicate that Jesus was asserting something more remarkable than that.

Read Exodus 3:14 and compare it with this passage. See event 13 on page 18.

Look at point “e.” in the event 13 section on page 18.

Jesus was asserting, in verse 58, that He was God—the very eternal “I AM” LORD God who spoke to Moses out of the burning bush.

You may want to review the Leader’s Guide material for event 13 in the table below.

Read Exodus 3:11-17.

What was Moses supposed to tell the Israelites when they would ask him, “Who sent you?”

- From God’s instructions in verse 14?

God told Moses to tell the Israelites that “I AM” sent him.

Ask the student: “What do you think is the meaning or significance of God referring to Himself as the ‘I AM’?”

One student who went through this course responded by saying that “God just is.” That was a profound response. God had no beginning nor does He have an end. He wasn’t created. God “just is!” (in theological terms we call this God’s “eternal self-existence”)

- From God’s instructions in verse 15?

God also told Moses to tell the Israelites that the “LORD” God of their

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was the One who sent Him.

“LORD” (when the word is found in all capital letters like this) is translated from a Hebrew word (“Yahweh or Jehovah”) which means essentially the same as “I AM.” It is the personal name for God. As we study through the Bible, we learn that there were many false gods and they all had personal names (Baal, for example). But the “LORD God” or “the LORD” is specifically the one and only true God, the Creator of heavens and earth—the God of the Bible!

c. Read John 10:22-33.

Were the Jews accurate in their understanding—that Jesus was claiming to be God?

“I and My Father are one.” – Jesus (verse 30)

Yes, it was true that Jesus claimed to be God.

Tell the student:

“Later in our study, after we examine the life of Jesus some more, I’d like to hear what you think about Jesus of Nazareth.”

Supplemental Information

The Trinity: You want to avoid getting too technical about the trinity, at this point. It’s probably best that you not even mention the word “trinity” because that may raise more questions than time would allow to answer.

However, for your own clarity in understanding, we have included (see below) the diagram that has been used for centuries to visualize the realities associated with the trinity.

The main concepts to understand are these:

- There is only ONE God, the LORD God of the Bible who created heaven & earth.
- There are three distinct persons in what Bible teachers call the “Godhead.”

- (1) God the Father – and He is fully God.
- (2) Jesus Christ (“the Son of God”) – and He is fully God.
- (3) The Holy Spirit – and He is fully God.

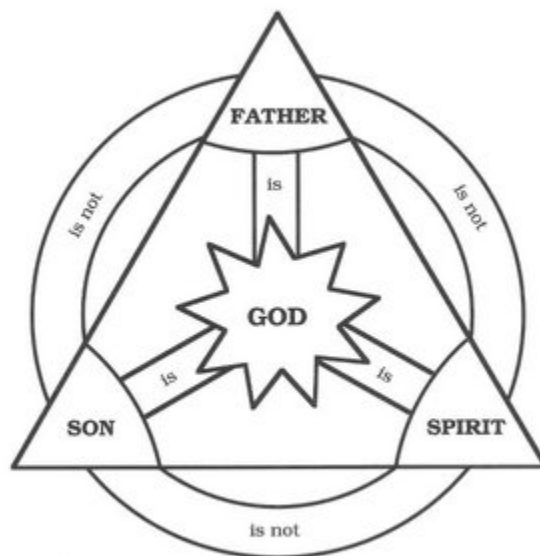
The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

- Thus, Jesus is both “the Son of God” and “God.”

Jesus, the Son of God: When the Bible refers to Jesus as “the Son of God” it means that Jesus has a very intimate and unified relationship with God the Father. Even though they are distinct persons, they are ONE.

This title for Jesus does not imply that there was a time when God’s Son did not exist and that out of some union with some other “god” He (Jesus) was born into existence. Jesus, God’s Son, has existed eternally with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

So, what happened in event 21 on page 22? The “Birth of Jesus of Nazareth” was the time in human history when God’s Son (who had always existed) entered into human flesh and was born of a woman, a virgin named Mary. He became a human being so that He could identify with us and demonstrate His uniqueness by living a perfect, sinless life. In doing so, He was qualified to die as the substitute offering to pay for our sins. “Incarnation” is the theological term used for the act of God’s Son becoming embodied in human flesh.



How is Jesus portrayed in the events on pages 24-25?

If necessary, review with the student the instructions in point e. of event 21 (“Birth of Jesus of Nazareth” on top of page 22 in *The Story of Hope*).

Remember the purpose of these “bottom of the double-page spread” activities—to help the student learn about Jesus, who He is and what He did, as the student reads and studies the Bible.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Betrayal of Jesus

29. When Judas Iscariot (one of Jesus’ twelve disciples) betrayed Him, Jesus did not supernaturally resist arrest but willingly submitted Himself to His captors. Matthew 26:1-2, 14-28, 45-56

a. Before you read from Matthew 26, read the prophecy in Psalm 41:7-9.

The psalmist predicted that enemies of the Messiah (Christ) would plot to kill Him. Even a very close friend (“who ate my bread”) of the Messiah would be involved in this conspiracy.

b. Read Matthew 26:1-2.

What did Jesus know would happen to Him?

Yes, Jesus knew what He was facing. He knew what had been prophesied many years before. But also, because He is God, He knew all things—He could clearly foresee the future.

c. Read Matthew 26:14-28.

Explain that when the text indicates that Judas Iscariot was “one of the twelve” this means that he was one of the twelve disciples who had followed and worked closely with Jesus for more than three years.

Jesus was predicting that His body would be broken and His blood would be shed.

Explain that Jesus was not establishing some kind of “Christian cannibalism” here. He was speaking symbolically. The bread that they broke at this supper was a symbol of the fact that His body would be broken (physically harmed). The cup of wine that they drank was symbolic of the blood that Jesus would soon shed for them.

Jesus used this last meal (“Last Supper”) with His disciples to talk with them about what was soon to happen—His blood would be shed for the remission of the sins of many people.

How does Jesus’ statement, in verse 28, clarify what John the Baptist said earlier, when he proclaimed, “Behold! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” See event 22 on page 22.

As we look at the overall story of the life of Jesus Christ, the proclamation that John the Baptist made at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry on earth now makes a lot more sense. Just as the sacrificial lambs died for the remission (forgiveness) of the sins of people who offered them on the bronze altar of the tabernacle in

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

the Old Testament, Jesus, “the Lamb of God,” would do something similar. But Jesus would die for the sins of “many”—the “sin of the world.”

d. Read Matthew 26:45-56.

Did Jesus have the power to have resisted arrest?

Yes, he could have prayed to the Father and twelve legions of angels* would have responded to deliver Him. (verse 53)

*Note: The standard Roman legion included 6,000 men. Thus, 12 legions of angels would have been 72,000 angels! But Jesus was probably just saying that He could have called a massive number of angels, if He had chosen to do so.

Why do you think that He submitted Himself to His captors?

Jesus knew that this arrest, as unjust as it was, was the Father’s will for Him. Also, the Old Testament Scriptures had prophesied that it would happen. In order to do the will of the Father and to fulfill the prophetic Scriptures, Jesus submitted Himself to the captors.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Appearances before Unjust Judges

30. Although Jesus was never proven guilty of any wrong doing in any religious or civil court, He was unjustly flogged and condemned to die by Roman crucifixion. Matthew 27:1-2, 11-24

a. Read Matthew 27:1-2.

What early indications do we see here that Jesus would not receive a fair trial?

The religious leaders “plotted against Jesus to put Him to death.” They were not simply planning to have him judged in a fair trial. In their minds, He was guilty and the trial was just a matter of legal “red tape” that they had to work through to get the outcome that they had desired for some time.

b. Read Matthew 27:11-14.

Did Jesus deny the accusation that He was the King of the Jews?

And the governor asked Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?” Jesus said to him, “*It is as you say.*” (verse 11)

Jesus did not deny the accusation, but He was not the political type of king that the Jews suggested He was. In their attempts to have Him tried and executed, the religious leaders wanted the Roman political leaders to think that Jesus was an insurrectionist rebel leader whose intent was to create a massive following for the purpose of attempting to overthrow the Roman government that was in power at the time. There was never any indication, at that time, that Jesus was motivated by a desire for political power.

▪ **In Genesis 49:10, God promised that the scepter, a sign of royalty, would not depart from the tribe of Judah. As a descendant of Judah, Jesus was qualified to be the King of the Jewish people. Review point c. in event 12 on page 17.**

Israel (formerly known as Jacob) was the father of Judah. He (Israel) predicted that a king and lawgiver would descend from his son Judah. Judah later became the head of a tribe (the tribe of Judah) that was one of 12 tribes of Israel’s descendants (the Israelites). The human step-parent and parent of Jesus, Joseph and Mary, were both from the tribe of Judah (descendants of Judah).

▪ **Review points b., c., and d. in event 19 on page 21. As a descendant of King David, who was also from the tribe of Judah, Jesus was qualified to re-establish the royal reign of King David’s family.**

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

David was the first descendant of Judah to fulfill the scepter prophecy of Genesis 49:10—the first one to become a king of the Israelites (Jewish people). After David died, his son Solomon reigned as King for many years. Then, other descendants of David ruled over the Israelites (later to be known as “Jews”).

But at the time that Jesus was born, more than 500 years had transpired since a descendant of David had reigned over the Israelites (Jews) as a king. As mentioned above, the human step-parent and parent of Jesus, Joseph and Mary, were both from the tribe of Judah. But, even more specifically than that, they were both descendants of King David!

With Jesus, the dynasty of King David was re-established. But, God had promised David that his (David’s) dynasty and kingdom would be established forever. How could that be if Jesus would soon die?

Hold that thought. We’ll learn the answer to that question later in our study.

c. Read Matthew 27:15-24.

What evidences do we see in this passage that Jesus was not guilty of the crimes for which He was being tried?

(1) The wife of the governor Pilate (who was serving as judge here) urged her husband to “have nothing to do with that just Man.” God had spoken to her in a dream about Jesus. (verse 19)

(2) Pilate also proclaimed that Jesus was a “just Person.” (verse 24)

Out of fear for the mob, and not because He found Jesus to be guilty of any crimes, Pilate delivered Jesus to the soldiers to be scourged and then crucified.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Crucifixion of Jesus

31. Jesus then died on a cross, as the perfect sacrificial Lamb for our sins and dealt the crushing blow to Satan that God had promised to Adam and Eve. Luke 23:26-38; 1 Corinthians 5:7

a. The Jewish historian Josephus described crucifixion as “the most wretched of deaths.” First, a prisoner was scourged mercilessly with a short, heavy whip. Then he was nailed to a cross where he suffered excruciating pain for hours before the rigors of crucifixion finally snuffed out his life.

In preparation for leading this study, read the [supplemental information](#) (see below) regarding crucifixion.

It will be very helpful for the study if you can ⁽¹⁾ copy the supplemental information on “crucifixion” (see below) and paste it into a blank word processing document page and ⁽²⁾ print it. Then ⁽³⁾ give a copy to the student and ⁽⁴⁾ read through it (aloud) together prior to reading the Bible passages below.

The more the student understands about the process of crucifixion, the more he/she will be able to grasp the significance of the death of Jesus Christ.

b. Read Psalm 22:1-18. King David wrote this psalm about the Jewish Messiah approximately 1,000 years before Jesus was born and hundreds of years before crucifixion was used as a death penalty in Canaan. Look for indications that the man described here (the Messiah) would be dying by crucifixion.

Explain: David was not describing something that they had personally observed. He was writing through the inspiration of God’s Holy Spirit and may not have understood all that he was writing.

Indications that may suggest the person described here would be dying by crucifixion:

Verses 6-7: People were ridiculing him publicly.

Verse 8: He needed to be delivered or rescued, so he was in a dire situation.

Verses 12-13: He was surrounded by enemies who were harassing him.

Verse 14: His life was “poured out like water” and all of his bones were out of joint.

Verse 15: His strength was dried up and he was suffering intense dehydration and thirst.

Verse 16: His feet had been pierced.

Verse 17: His bones were exposed (probably from under his tightly stretched flesh).

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Verse 18: Someone was gambling to take possession of his garments (so he was naked at this time).

c. Read Luke 23:26-38.

What does Jesus’ prayer in verse 34 tell us about Him?

Jesus was at peace with Himself, at peace with God, and at peace with His enemies during this entire ordeal. He was more concerned about others than Himself and was able to forgive those who were carrying out His crucifixion, even though He had done nothing worthy of death, much less such a horrible and humiliating death.

d. Read the last phrase in 1 Corinthians 5:7.

“For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”

Think of the similarities between the Passover lambs that were killed in Egypt and Jesus’ death on the cross. See event 14 on page 18.

Here are some of the similarities that the student should be able to understand at this point in the study. There are other similarities that will become obvious as we continue in the study, but don’t present those yet.

- (1) The Passover lamb was to be a male and without blemish. (Exodus 12:5)
- (2) The lamb did not die because of anything he had done.
- (3) The innocent lamb shed its blood and died in order to save others.

Supplemental Information

Crucifixion: Crucifixion provided a death that was particularly painful (hence the term excruciating, literally "out of crucifying"), gruesome (hence dissuading against the crimes punishable by it) and public (hence the metaphorical expression "to nail to the cross"), using whatever means were most expedient for that goal. Crucifixion methods varied considerably with location and time period.

The Greek and Latin words corresponding to "crucifixion" applied to many different forms of painful execution, from impaling on a stake to affixing to a tree, to an upright pole or to a combination of an upright and a crossbeam.

If a crossbeam was used, the condemned man or woman was forced to carry it on his or her shoulders, which would have been torn open by flagellation, to the place of execution. A whole cross would weigh well over 300 pounds (135 kilograms), but the crossbeam would weigh only 75-125 pounds (35-60 kilograms).

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

The person executed may sometimes have been attached to the cross by ropes, but nails are mentioned in a passage of Josephus, where he states that, at the Siege of Jerusalem, "the soldiers out of rage and hatred, nailed those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to the crosses, by way of jest".

Josephus describes multiple tortures and positions of crucifixion during the siege of Jerusalem as Titus crucified the rebels; and Seneca the Younger recounts: "I see crosses there, not just of one kind but made in many different ways: some have their victims with head down to the ground; some impale their private parts; others stretch out their arms on the gibbet."

At times the gibbet was only one vertical stake. This was the simplest available construction for torturing and killing the criminals. Frequently, however, there was a cross-piece attached either at the top to give the shape of a T or just below the top, as in the form most familiar in Christian symbolism. Other forms were in the shape of the letters X and Y.

The earliest writings that speak specifically of the shape of the cross on which Jesus died describe it as shaped like the letter T (the Greek letter tau), or composed of an upright and a transverse beam, together with a small peg in the upright.

In popular depictions of crucifixion, the condemned would most likely have nails in his or her wrists, as the hands do not have the structure nor the strength to carry the weight of the full body.

If the writings of Josephus are taken into account, a sedile (a small seat attached to the front of the cross) was used at times as a way of impaling the "private parts" as he wrote; this would be achieved by resting the condemned man's weight on a peg or board of some sort, and driving a nail or spike through the genitals. If this was a common practice, then it would give credibility to accounts of crucified men taking days to die upon a cross, since the resting of the body upon a crotch peg or sedile would certainly prevent death by suspension asphyxiation. It would also provide another method of humiliation and great pain to the condemned, since nudity was almost certainly a feature of most crucifixions.

A possibility that does not require tying is that the nails were inserted just above the wrist, between the two bones of the forearm. The nails could also be driven through the wrist, in a space between four carpal bones. Another possibility is that the nails may have been driven in at an angle, entering in the palm in the crease that delineates the bulky region at the base of the thumb, and exiting in the wrist, passing through the carpal tunnel.

The length of time required to reach death could range from a matter of hours to a number of days, depending on exact methods, the health of the crucified person and environmental circumstances.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

One theory suggests that the typical cause of death was asphyxiation. It is conjectured that when the whole body weight was supported by the stretched arms, the condemned would have severe difficulty inhaling, due to hyper-expansion of the lungs. The condemned would therefore have to draw himself up by his arms, or have his feet supported by tying or by a wood block. Indeed, Roman executioners could be asked to break the condemned's legs, after he had hung for some time, in order to hasten his death. Once deprived of support and unable to lift himself, the condemned would die within a few minutes. If death did not come from asphyxiation, it could result from a number of other causes, including physical shock caused by the scourging that preceded the crucifixion, the nailing itself, dehydration, and exhaustion.

Some experiments have revealed that, when suspended with arms at 60° to 70° from the vertical, test subjects had no difficulty breathing, only rapidly-increasing discomfort and pain. This would correspond to the Roman use of crucifixion as a prolonged, agonizing, humiliating death.

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion>

Editorial Note: It is very possible (and perhaps likely) that the nails that bound Jesus to the cross pierced his wrists, and not the palms of his hands. The Greek word translated “hand” does sometimes refer to a larger area that could include the wrist.

But, since we do not know for sure where the nails pierced his “hands,” we have instructed the artist of our images to depict the nails as having been in the palms of the hands of Jesus, rather than to contradict the expectations of most viewers and create unnecessary concerns.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

A Repentant, Dying Thief

32. As Jesus was dying, one guilty man who was being crucified beside Him placed his faith in Jesus and was granted the gift of a life in a paradise beyond the grave. Luke 23:39-47

a. Read Luke 23:39-42.

Which of these were true of the repentant criminal?

He feared God.

³⁹ Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.”

⁴⁰ But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?”

Note: The Matthew 27:44 account of this event indicates that, at first, both of the criminals were involving in “heaping insults” on Jesus. Apparently something happened to cause one of the criminals to fear God and take Jesus seriously.

He acknowledged his own guilt.

⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds;

He acknowledged Jesus’ innocence.

⁴¹ ...but this Man has done nothing wrong.”

He believed that Jesus was truly a king.

⁴² Then he said to Jesus, “Lord*, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

*Note: Some Greek manuscripts do not include the Greek word for “Lord,” but simply read “Jesus, remember me...”

He believed in life beyond death.

⁴² ... remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

He believed that Jesus could bestow some kind of “kingdom favor” on him.

⁴² ... remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

He simply made a simple faith-based request of Jesus.

⁴² ... remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

b. Read Luke 23:43.

Discuss the *what*, *when*, and *certainty* of Jesus’ promise.

The “what” of Jesus’ promise = Jesus promised that this man would be with Him (Jesus) in paradise.

The “when” of Jesus’ promise = It would happen “today.”

The “certainty” of Jesus’ promise = Jesus assured him by prefacing the promise with, “I tell you the truth...”

c. What other paradise did God provide much earlier in the Bible? See event 3 on page 13.

(1) The Garden of Eden, where God placed Adam and Eve, was a beautiful and fruitful paradise garden.

(2) Explain that what the Bible sometimes calls “Heaven” is the current paradise where true believers in Jesus Christ go when they die. This repentant thief is in the heavenly paradise with Jesus now. Think how close He came to missing out on the blessing of living with Jesus in God’s heavenly paradise.

(3) Later in our study, we’ll learn about an even more wonderful paradise that God is preparing for those who trust in Him for the forgiveness of their sins. True believers in Jesus Christ will live there eternally.

d. Read Luke 23:44-47.

What did the centurion* conclude?

*Note: A centurion was a Roman soldier who commanded 100 men. This centurion may have been the Roman soldier who was in charge of carrying out the crucifixion of Jesus. As a Roman centurion, no doubt he had observed and participated in many crucifixions, including crucifixions of men who made messianic claims.

The centurion’s conclusion: ⁴⁷ The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, “Surely this was a righteous man.”

Other accounts of this event, indicate that the centurion said: “Surely he was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27:54, Mark 15:39) Perhaps the centurion made both statements, but one thing is certain—He was impressed with what he observed on that occasion! Notice that “he praised God” as he made this proclamation.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

e. Read Mark 15:33-39.

What other historical facts are given here regarding Jesus’ death?

Some of the more important additional facts:

(1) Verses 33-34: Explain that God the Father had to turn His back on Jesus, His Son, because Jesus, at this point, had taken our sins upon Himself.

(2) Verses 37-38: Explain the reason why the “veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” Remind the student of the veil in the tabernacle (see page 10) that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, where God dwelt among them. Explain that there was a similar veil in the temple in Jerusalem (the temple that King David’s son built for God with the materials King David had prepared). It was this temple veil that was rent at the very time that Jesus died.

Ask the student why he/she thinks that happened. Explain that because Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins, we can now approach God through what Jesus has done for us. Jesus’ death made it possible for us to be restored to a confident and intimate relationship with God.

(3) Verse 39: Explain that the writer (Mark) of this account of Jesus’ death proclaimed that Jesus was truly “the Son of God!” Luke (in the Luke 23:43-47 passage) recorded that the centurion proclaimed that Jesus was “a righteous man!” The centurion was so impressed that he probably made both of these proclamations, as well as other remarks of worshipful adoration.

How is Jesus portrayed in the events on pages 26-27?

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Resurrection of Jesus

33. On the third day after Jesus died and was buried, God supernaturally raised Him from the dead to demonstrate His power over sin, death, and Hell. Luke 24:1-12, 36-43

a. Read Hebrews 2:14-15.

What purpose for Jesus’ death do we see in verse 14?

Destroy the devil, the one who had the power of death

You may want to tie this back to Genesis 3:15 (event 7, page 15).

In verse 15?

Release those who have been bound by the fear of death

b. Read Luke 24:1-12.

Look for evidences that Jesus was no longer in the tomb.

(1) Verse 2 -- The stone that sealed the tomb was rolled away.

(2) Verse 3 – The women who entered the tomb did not find the body of Jesus.

(3) Verses 4-6 – Two men (angels) informed the women that Jesus was “not here, but is risen!”

(4) Verse 6-7 – The angels reminded the women that Jesus had told them that He would rise again on the third day.

(5) Verse 12 – Peter ran to the tomb to look for himself but found nothing there other than the burial cloths in which the body of Jesus had been wrapped.

c. Read Luke 24:36-43.

What did Jesus do to prove that He was not just a spirit—that His *physical body* had been raised from the dead?

(1) Jesus showed them His hands and feet (which had been pierced with the nails of crucifixion) and invited them to touch Him and see that He wasn’t just a ghost. (verses 36-40)

(2) Jesus asked for and ate food in their presence. (verses 41-43)

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

d. *Because God raised Jesus from the dead...*

- **True** or False? *We can have confidence that the things Jesus said about Himself were true.*

In light of what we have learned about God (that He is holy and just and right), we can be sure that God would not have raised Jesus from the dead if Jesus had been delusional or dishonest in His claims regarding His unique relationship with God.

- **True** or False? *We can have confidence that God was satisfied with Jesus’ death as a payment for our sins.*

It is very important that the student understand the connection between the resurrection of Christ and God’s satisfaction with Jesus’ death as a payment for our sins. You may want to read the following paragraphs and be prepared to explain this reality in your own words.

When God raised Jesus from the grave, God was expressing His complete satisfaction with the life and death of Jesus—He had accomplished exactly what His Father sent Him to earth to do.

He had lived a perfectly sinless life and died for human sins. But unlike the innocent sacrificial lambs that had died down through the ages, Jesus took all of the sins of the whole world upon Himself on the cross. As Jesus died, for the first and only time, the Father withdrew from Jesus, His Son. Because, at that moment, Jesus (who never had experienced sin) was taking the judgment of our sins. One Bible writer says it this way:

²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin* for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

*Note: This probably means “a sin offering.”

The account of Jesus’ death recorded by John, an apostle of Jesus, tells us that in his final moments Jesus spoke these words: “It is finished!” (John 19:30) Even though Jesus probably spoke Aramaic routinely, here He uttered one Greek word—“tetelestai.”

This word was a common marketplace term meaning “paid in full.” When a debt was fully paid, “tetelestai” (pronounced “tuh-tell-uh-sty”) would be written on a loan document, will, or letter. In the first century, when people had paid their debt in full, they would shout out the word “tetelestai.” It was a shout of triumph...a shout of victory. When Jesus said, “It is finished,” He was declaring victory. The sin debt of the entire world had been paid.

The resurrection of Jesus was kind of a receipt that God has given us—a

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

certified proof that our sin debt has indeed been paid. But whether or not we will choose to receive that payment for our sins is another matter.

e. As you think back over what we have studied, how would you personally answer this question: “Who is Jesus?” One great literary critic and philosopher has said that there are only three options:

- He was a lunatic.
- He was a liar.
- He was and is the Lord God just as He said.

With His claims of Oneness with God in mind, we have only three options:

(1) We can conclude that Jesus was a **lunatic**—a deranged man with empty delusions of grandeur.

(2) We can conclude that Jesus was an intentional **liar**—a man who repeatedly fabricated statements about himself but knew exactly what he was doing.

(3) We can conclude that Jesus was who He claimed to be—the **Lord God**, who has the power to forgive us of our sins and give us everlasting life.

In preparation for the closing discussion for this event, read the article in the supplemental information section below. It will prepare you to lead the discussion about what some have called the “trilemma”—one crucial choice from three options.

We suggest that you copy and paste the text of this article into a word processing document and print it for the student to take with him.

Supplemental Information

Lunatic, Liar, or Lord?

Source: www.Existence-of-God.com (March 8, 2008)

Even those who are not persuaded by Christianity often have great respect for Jesus. Among those who reject the idea that Jesus was God incarnate, there are many who are still followers of him to some degree. “Jesus was a great moral teacher”, some say, “but he wasn’t God”. According to this view, Jesus is to be followed as a great human being, but not as a divine one.

This idea that Jesus was merely a great human being, i.e. a great human being but nothing more, is, as C.S. Lewis argued in Part 2 of *Mere Christianity*, indefensible.

Jesus made the most astonishing claims, not only about God, society and ethics, but also about himself. He claimed to have the authority to forgive sins, to be the representative of all humanity come to die in order to reconcile man to God, and to be the only way for people to

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

attain salvation.

Faced with the fact that Jesus made these claims about himself, there are three things that we might say about him: Either Jesus’ claims were false and he knew it, or his claims were false and he didn’t know it, or his claims were true. None of these suggests that Jesus was a great, but merely human, teacher. Anyone who has that view needs to think again.

The first thing that we might say about Jesus is that his claims were false and he knew it, in which case he was a liar. If Jesus did not believe that his claims about himself were true, then when he made those claims he was lying.

Jesus’ claims about himself were so central to his teachings, though, that if they were lies then he can hardly be deemed a great teacher. If Jesus set out to systematically deceive people about who he was and how their sins were to be dealt with, then he was among the worst teachers that have ever walked the earth.

The second thing that we might say about Jesus is that his claims were false and he didn’t know it, in which case he was a lunatic. If Jesus believed that his claims about himself were true, and they weren’t, then he was a delusional egomaniac. If an ordinary person believes himself to be God incarnate, then that person is, put quite simply, insane.

Again, if this were the case, if Jesus taught that this is who he was and was mistaken, then he was as bad a teacher as there has ever been.

The third thing that we might say about Jesus is that his claims were true, in which case he was, and is, Lord. If Jesus believed that his claims about himself were true and they were, then Jesus was not only a great human being, but was also God on Earth.

If we take Jesus seriously, then we must take Jesus’ claims about himself seriously. We cannot say that Jesus was a great teacher whom we admire and look up to, but that the most fundamental element of his teachings was a monumental error. Jesus was not a great, but merely human, teacher; he was either much less than this, or much more.

Those who respond to this argument by writing Jesus off as either a liar or a lunatic are, for all that has been said so far, just as reasonable as those who respond by accepting Jesus as Lord. This argument is an attack only on the view that Jesus was a great teacher but not God; there is nothing in it that counts against the view that Jesus was a terrible teacher. In order to show that it is better to view Jesus as Lord than as either a liar or a lunatic, it would have to be demonstrated that there is some reason to take Jesus’ claims seriously.

Do we have any reason, though, to take Jesus’ claims seriously? Many have argued that we do, that we have the strongest possible evidence that Jesus knew what he was talking about when it came to the supernatural. There is, it is argued, substantial historical evidence that Jesus was raised from the dead, endorsing his claims to religious authority.

The Resurrection, it is said, was a divine endorsement of Jesus’ teachings, God’s confirmation that Jesus’ teachings were true. If this is correct, then there can be no doubt as to which of the three positions concerning Jesus outlined above is the correct one. If there is significant evidence for the resurrection, then we have to take Jesus seriously.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

<http://www.existence-of-god.com/lord-liar-lunatic.html>

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Ascension of Jesus

34. After His resurrection, Jesus made numerous earthly appearances to His disciples and then ascended to Heaven to be with His Father. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Acts 1:6-11

a. Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.

True or False? *More than 500 people saw Jesus alive after His resurrection and most of them were still living when this letter to the Corinthians was written.*

It is highly significant that the majority of the 500+ people who saw Jesus alive after He rose from the dead were still living when Paul (who wrote this statement) made the claim. If anyone doubted Paul’s claim, they could have sought out some these people to see if Paul had told the truth.

b. Read Acts 1:6-11.

Explain that this event occurred 40 days after the resurrection of Jesus. Give a brief summary of what happened during those days—meetings of Jesus with His disciples in various places. Explain that Jesus probably did much more during those days than was recorded in the Bible.

Explain the “kingdom question” that followers of Jesus asked Him—their expectation that He would set up a literal on-earth kingdom at this point. Also explain that we’ll learn more about the earthly kingdom that they were expecting in a later part of our study. Their expectation was right but their timing was premature.

Acts 1:8 records the last words Jesus spoke on earth. Read Acts 1:8 and summarize the final statement of Jesus to His followers.

Jesus promised that the “Holy Spirit” would come upon His followers. Explain that the Holy Spirit is also a person of the Godhead—He (the Holy Spirit) is God, just as Jesus is God and just as the Father is God.

The Holy Spirit is the person of the Godhead who comes into and upon believers to give them the supernatural power that they need to serve God.

c. Read Acts 1:9-11.

What promise did the two men in white apparel (angels) give to the followers of Jesus?

They asserted that Jesus would return back to the earth. Two details from their promise are important:

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

(1) “This same Jesus”—the very same person who had lived among them, died for them, and had been raised from the dead.

(2) “Come in like manner as you saw Him go”—a literal, visible, physical ascension would mean a literal, visible, physical return of Jesus.

- d. The next time Jesus appears in the story of the Bible is recorded a few chapters later. Read Acts 7:54-56.**

Set the context—the stoning of Stephen.

Where was Jesus at that time?

Jesus was in Heaven, standing at the right hand of God. He was aware of what was happening to Stephen and was probably standing, waiting to receive Stephen in the heavenly paradise where true believers now go when they die.

- e. What is Jesus now doing in Heaven?**

Read Hebrews 7:24-25. Hint: *He* and *Him* (in the New King James Version and many other versions) refer to Jesus.

Jesus “always lives” to make intercession for people who come to God through Him. Explain to the student, that “Jesus wants you to come to God through Him.” And “As your attorney, He will intercede with God for you.”

Note: The King James Version word “uttermost” means “completely” or “forever.”

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Peter Proclaims the Good News

35. Soon after Jesus ascended, His disciples began to proclaim the good news about who Jesus was, what He did, and why people should trust in Him as their Savior. Acts 2:22-36

a. Ten days after Jesus ascended to Heaven, the Holy Spirit of God came upon the followers of Jesus just as He had promised.

Give an overview of what had happened since the ascension of Jesus—the assembly of the 120 in the upper room in Jerusalem until the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon them to empower them. Don’t go into much detail, but do explain how the Holy Spirit miraculously gave the followers of Jesus the ability to communicate in the languages of the people who had come to Jerusalem for the annual Pentecost feast.

Mention briefly that, from this time forward (even now), when a person becomes a true believer in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit of God comes to dwell within him/her immediately.

b. On this occasion one of the disciples of Jesus (Simon Peter) presented his first message about Jesus. Based upon what he had personally seen and heard, what did Peter say about Jesus?

Read Acts 2:22-36.

▪ His Life (verse 22)

²² “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—

(1) God attested (certified as being genuine) by the miracles He did through Jesus that Jesus was who He said He was—the very Son of God, fully God.

(2) “As you yourselves also know”—many of these people had observed the miracles that Jesus performed. They could not claim ignorance as an excuse to disbelieve.

▪ His Death (verse 23)

²³ Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;

(1) The death of Jesus was in God’s plan, long before it happened. The Bible says in another place that it was planned before the world was created. (Ephesians 1:3-7)

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

(2) But it was “lawless hands” that took Jesus and put Him to death by crucifixion.

▪ His Resurrection (verses 24-32)

Then, Peter quoted from one of the psalms (songs) of the Old Testament that had been written by King David—Psalm 16:

²⁴ whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. ²⁵ For David says concerning Him:

‘I foresaw the LORD always before my face,
For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.
²⁶ Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad;
Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope.
²⁷ For You will not leave my soul in Hades,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.
²⁸ You have made known to me the ways of life;
You will make me full of joy in Your presence.’

²⁹ “Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, ³¹ he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.

Note: Peter quoted Psalm 16:8-10 in verses 25-28. Be aware that this psalm was written by King David about 1,000 years before the earthly life of Jesus.

▪ His Ascension (verses 33-35)

³³ Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

³⁴ “For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself:

‘The LORD said to my Lord,

“Sit at My right hand,

³⁵ Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”’

c. What was Peter’s overall conclusion regarding Jesus of Nazareth?

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Read verse 36.

³⁶ “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Keep in mind that Simon Peter knew Jesus as well as anyone. He spent more than three years with Jesus and had personally observed His life, listened to His teachings, witnessed most or all of His miracles, watched Him die, spent many hours with Him after His resurrection, and witnessed His ascension into Heaven. Peter certainly knew what he was talking about.

But the incredible confidence with which Peter spoke here is remarkable in light of the fact that only 53 days transpired between the time that Peter had a lapse of faith and denied Jesus until this day of Pentecost! Something powerfully convincing must have happened during that time to boost his confidence in who Jesus was and is. No doubt it was the resurrection of Jesus that solidified his belief that Jesus was and is “both Lord and Christ.”

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Jesus’ Return for Believers

36. Just as He promised during His earthly ministry, Jesus will return to take those who have truly believed in Him to be with Him in a heavenly paradise. John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

- a. Beginning with this event, the final five events in this condensed version of the Big Story of the Bible have not yet occurred. To this point, we have been studying Bible history. But now we will see how seamlessly *The Story of Hope* moves from Bible history into Bible prophecy.
- b. Before His death, what did Jesus tell his disciples in order to comfort them?

Read John 14:1-3.

Set the context of this passage by explaining how that the disciples of Jesus were troubled because He was talking about leaving them.

Jesus comforted them with these four promises:

(1) In Heaven (“My Father’s house”) there are many dwelling places or mansions.

Note: Some translations say “mansions” and some say “dwelling places.” If they are “dwelling places” in God’s house (Heaven) then we can be sure that they are mansions by our earthly standards!

(2) I am going to prepare a place specifically for you.

(3) Just as surely as I am going away, I also will come again to receive you to Myself.

(4) Where I am (in the Father’s House) you will be with me.

c. To learn more about this return of Jesus that we call *the rapture*, read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

▪ **What will happen to Jesus’ followers who have already died?**

Verses 13-14 – God will bring them with Him when He returns. This indicates that they are with Him in Heaven now.

Verse 16 – “The dead in Christ shall rise first.” If God brings deceased believers with Him, in what sense will deceased believers rise first?

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

When a believer dies, the immaterial part of him/her—the real essence of the person (which we call that the “spirit” or “soul”)—goes to Heaven to be with Jesus and God the Father. But the body of a believer remains on earth. When Jesus returns, the spirits (souls) of these believers will return with Him, but their bodies will be raised (in a new incorruptible form). At that time, their spirits (souls) will be united with these resurrection bodies.

▪ What will happen to Jesus’ followers who are still alive?

Verses 15-17 – They will “caught up” together with the deceased believers and will meet the Lord Jesus in the air. From that point, they will be with the Lord forever.

The word “rapture” that often is used as a name for this event comes from the Latin word for “caught up” (Latin = rapiemur).

d. Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-57. What additional information is given here regarding the return of Jesus Christ?

This passage basically elaborates on what was said in the previous passage. Here are some of the key points:

(1) “We will not all sleep”—Some believers (those who are alive when Jesus returns) will not experience death. When Jesus returns for believers, their bodies will be “changed” into imperishable* and immortal* bodies that are suited for Heaven.

*Note: Imperishable = will not deteriorate; immortal = will not die

(2) This “rapture” event will occur very quickly—“in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye.”

(3) A trumpet sound will precede this event.

(4) At this point, death...for the true believer in Jesus Christ...will be “swallowed up on victory” (defeated).

You may want to ask the student: “If Jesus were to return right now for those who truly trust in Him, would you be ready for Him?”

How is Jesus portrayed in the events on pages 28-29?

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Jesus’ Return as King

37. Shortly after His return for believers, Jesus will come back with those He took to Heaven and will reign as a King over the whole earth. Revelation 19:11-19; Revelation 20:1-6

a. Be aware that the literary style of the Revelation is highly symbolic. But as we look beneath the symbolic wording, four major facts emerge. Read Revelation 19:11-19.

▪ **Jesus will return to the earth. * (Why do we think this is the Jesus we have studied?)**

There are several symbols in these verses that can be connected to prophecies that point to the Jewish Messiah (Christ). But to keep this discussion simple, focus on the most obvious indications that this rider is Jesus.

(1) We do know that Jesus is called “The Word of God” in John 1:14. The names “Faithful” and “True” would also be appropriate for Him.

(2) Even though Jesus is not specifically identified as the rider on this white horse, He is the only Person who could appropriately be called by the name “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS”—the ultimate King and the ultimate LORD.

(3) The robe dipped in blood may symbolically speak of the blood that He shed as our sacrificial “Lamb of God.”

*Note: This return differs from the one in event 36 in a variety of ways. For one thing, in that “return” Jesus will not descend all the way to the earth, as He will here. When He returns to receive true believers to Himself, they will be caught up to meet Him in the air.

▪ **Jesus will be accompanied by the armies of heaven. (Who comprises these armies?)**

Since these armies of heaven are not specifically identified in this passage, we must speculate about their identity. They could be angels. But the most common interpretation is that they will be the believers who have joined Jesus in Heaven. Even though they are described as “armies” there is no indication here that they are involved in the fight. The power of the KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS is sufficient to defeat the forces of evil.

▪ **Jesus will defeat those who oppose Him at that time. (Who are these enemies of Jesus?)**

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

In the years preceding this event, the human race will become more and more godless and wicked, similar to the condition before the Great Flood (event 10). Through the evil influence of one very powerful human leader, many kings of the world will challenge God and anyone who takes a stand for righteousness. These are the godless people who will be defeated by Jesus Christ when He returns to the earth.

▪ **In doing so, the wrath of God will be justly bestowed. (Why is this judgment just and fair?)**

At the outset of this event (verse 11), the Bible says regarding the “Faithful and True” rider of this white horse that “in righteousness He judges and makes war.” Thus, this will indeed be a righteous war!

As God deals with the human race, His holiness, His mercy, and His justice are continually being tested.

(1) Because God is holy, our sins offend Him more deeply than our limited human minds can imagine.

(2) Because He is a merciful God, He refrains from giving us the immediate judgment that our sins deserve.

(3) Because God is just, our sins must eventually be judged.

At various times in the Bible, such as the Great Flood of Noah’s time, God’s longsuffering mercy was pushed beyond His self-imposed limit and the just and righteous wrath of God was dramatically unleashed upon the transgressors—righteous judgment was served in due time.

That’s what we see in verse 15!

b. Read Revelation 20:1-3.

Who is the *old serpent* and what will happen to him?

The passage makes it clear that this “dragon, that serpent of old” is none other than the Devil, also known as Satan—the same evil being who deceived Adam and Eve and tempted Jesus.

God will send an angel to confine Satan in a pit for 1,000 years.

Discuss with the student what life on earth would be like without the evil tempting influence of Satan, even though people would still have sinful natures. That’s exactly the condition that will exist for 1,000 years, at a future point in human history.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

c. Read Revelation 20:4-6.

▪ What will take place on the earth for 1,000 years?

Jesus Christ will reign as king on this earth for 1,000 years. Those who have truly believed in Jesus Christ will reign with Him in places of honor and leadership.

▪ Where in our study have we seen predictors that Jesus would reign as a king?

It is not essential to review all of the indications that have appeared throughout this study that Jesus would eventually reign as a king. But it is important for the student to realize that this theme begins early in the Bible and is interwoven through the Scriptures to the very end.

Ask the student the above question and see how many of these “predictors that Jesus would reign as king” he/she can recall. Here are some of the more obvious ones:

(1) Many centuries before, God prophesied through the man Israel (Jacob) that a king and lawgiver would “not depart from” the tribe of Judah. (See point c. in event 12)

(2) God promised to David (ancestor of Joseph and Mary, earthly parents of Jesus) that his dynasty would be established forever. (event 19)

(3) When Jesus was born, an angel declared to the shepherds that the baby was “Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:11 in event 21)

Note: We didn’t study Matthew 2:1-2, but that passage indicates that God had in some way informed the wise men from the East that Jesus was “born King of the Jews.”

(4) When asked by Pilate if He (Jesus) was the King of the Jews, Jesus did not deny it. (event 30)

(5) When Jesus ascended to Heaven after the resurrection, His disciples were expecting Jesus to establish an earthly kingdom at that time. The angel who spoke to them did not rebuke them for their expectation but only explained that it wasn’t the time for that. (event 34)

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Satan’s Final Doom

38. Later, following a final attempt to lead a rebellion against God near the end of Jesus’ kingdom, Satan will be cast into the lake of fire that God prepared earlier for him. Revelation 20:7-10

- a. Prior to his eventual final doom, Satan will be bound for a period of 1,000 years.

Read Revelation 20:1-3.

Read this passage, which was associated with the previous event, in order to connect this current event to the previous one.

At the end of the 1,000 years Satan will be released temporarily. What will Satan do at this time?

Read Revelation 20:7-9.

It is difficult to interpret this prophecy precisely. For example, we don’t know who “Gog and Magog” will be.

But the main idea of this passage seems clear—Satan will immediately begin to deceive again, as soon as he is released from confinement. It appears that he will instigate a massive rebellion against “the saints (followers of King Jesus) and the beloved city (probably Jerusalem).”

This rebellion against the earthly kingdom of Jesus Christ will be his last stand.

- b. **Read and review Isaiah 14:15 and Matthew 25:41. See event 4 on page 13.**

In **Isaiah 14:15**, Isaiah prophesied that Lucifer (Satan) would “be brought down to Sheol*, to the lowest depths of the Pit.”

*Sheol = Hebrew term for “the abode of the dead”

It may be that this latter phrase is predicting what we’ll soon read in Revelation 20:10.

In **Matthew 25:41** Jesus said that God had prepared “everlasting fire” for the devil and his angels. At the time that Jesus spoke those words, Satan (“the devil”) was still unconfined, but “everlasting fire” was already awaiting him.

Now read Revelation 20:10.

What do we learn here about the nature of Satan’s final destiny?

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

(1) The devil (Satan) will be cast into a “lake of fire and brimstone*.”

*Note: Brimstone is elemental sulphur, which burns with an extremely hot blue flame that is nearly invisible and produces the highly unpleasantly pungent gas, sulphur dioxide.

(2) Two evil persons precede Satan to this lake of fire—the “beast” and the “false prophet.” Even though he is called “the beast” this person was the human leader of the rebellion against God that the KING OF KINGS subdued forcefully when He returned to earth (see event 37). The “false prophet” was probably a false religious leader who assisted the beast, by deceiving people into believing that the beast was some kind of god.

See Revelation 19:19-20.

(3) The torment of Satan’s punishment (as well as that of the others who are sent there) will continue “day and night forever and ever.”

c. Review Genesis 3:15. See event 7 on page 15.

What is the connection between Genesis 3:15 (in the third chapter of the Bible) and the final doom of Satan described here (in the third chapter from the end of the Bible)?

Soon after Adam and Eve first disobeyed God, God pronounced an act of judgment that would come upon Satan. A special male offspring of Eve would (metaphorically) inflict a crushing blow to Satan’s head—God would send a Satan-Conqueror to defeat Satan.

When Jesus died on the cross to pay for the sins of the world, Satan’s judgment was sealed. God had provided a perfect way for sinners to be forgiven and thus released from Satan’s powerful, evil grip.

Even though the ultimate personal doom of Satan did not come at that time, in God’s time it will come.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Dreadful Destiny for Unbelievers

39. Then at the end of earthly time as we now know it, unbelievers will stand before God to be sentenced to eternal punishment for their sins. Revelation 20:11-15

a. As this event begins, what will happen to this present earth and its heaven? Read Revelation 20:11 and 2 Peter 3:10.

They go away! There will be no place for them. They flee from the face of the One who sits upon this throne.

2 Peter 3:10-13 explains the future fiery destruction of the current earth and its heavens in more detail, but don’t go there unless the discussion requires it.

Just explain that this passing away of the current earth and its heavens is mentioned in other places in the Bible. It will be God’s method of purging the earth of the sin and its curse. In the next event of this study, the reason for that will become clear.

b. Who do you think the Judge will be on this great white throne? Read Revelation 20:11-12a (first phrase of verse 12).

Some Bible versions say that the people being judged here are “standing before God.” Other versions read “standing before the throne.”

But verse 11 makes it clear that God* is on this judgment throne. Only He has the power to cause the earth and heaven flee away.

*Note: We do not know for sure if this is God the Father or God the Son, Jesus who is seated on the “great white throne.” There is Biblical evidence that seems to indicate that Jesus will be the Judge on this throne.

c. Books will place important roles in this Great White Throne Judgment. Read Revelation 20:12-13.

▪ **What will be the role of the “the books”?**

Although the passage does not clearly tell us, most Bible scholars believe that “the books” mentioned here contain records of the thoughts, decisions, and actions of everyone who has ever lived, from Adam and Eve until the end of Christ’s earthly kingdom.

These books will not be for God’s benefit, since He has perfect and complete knowledge of all that has happened on earth. The “books” will probably serve as an undeniable and indisputable record for the people who stand before God that He is just and righteous in the execution of His judgment.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Note: Verse 14 can be confusing for some new students of the Bible. They sometimes think that God will evaluate their “good works” to determine whether or not they go to Heaven or Hell. If necessary, explain that, at this point, the eternal destiny of the people at this judgment will have already been determined. The degree of their judgment will be what God, the Judge, will assess. Yes, the Bible does teach that there will be a variety of degrees of eternal punishment for unbelievers.

▪ What will be the role of the “Book of Life”?

The “Book of Life” is a special book and not at all like the other books. Apparently, it is a record of everyone who has trusted in God’s Son, Jesus Christ, as his/her personal Savior. It is not a record of “works” but a record of names—the names of all the people who have received God’s gift of eternal life.

This is a good place to reinforce the truth that these people’s eternal destiny (Heaven or Hell) will not be determined by their deeds which are recorded in “the books” but by whether or not their names are recorded in “the Book of Life.”

d. Who will be cast into the lake of fire? Read Revelation 20:14-15.

▪ According to verse 14?

In verse 13 we are told that “Death and Hades” deliver up the dead that are in them. Then, in verse 14 we read that “Death and Hades” will be cast into the lake of fire. But, who are these “Death and Hades” people?

“Death” here probably refers to the **bodies** of those who have died and “Hades” (another name for “Hell”) probably refers to the **spirits** (“souls”) of these same people who died.

So, this passage is teaching that the spirits of people who have gone to Hell will be united with resurrected bodies and will stand before God in those bodies. Then, these people (non-perishable & immortal body and spirit) will be cast into the lake of fire.

▪ According to verse 15?

¹⁵ “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

What is the “first death”? If eternal existence in the lake of fire is the “second death,” what is the “first death?”

The term the “first death” does not appear in the Bible. But the fact that the term the “second death” does appear, it is obvious that the Apostle John (who wrote the book of Revelation) had a first death in mind.

The “first death” that John was thinking of may be a combination of spiritual death and physical death. They were both earthly and temporal experiences. In contrast to this “first death” the “second death” will occur in the world to come and will be eternal.

Remember that the essence of “death” is separation; it does not mean the cessation of life (conscious existence).

When Adam and Eve first sinned, they died spiritually. They became separated from God, but continued to have a conscious existence.

When Adam, Eve, and others died physically, their spirits departed (separated) from their bodies. But their spirits continued to have conscious existence beyond the grave.

At the time that unbelievers will be cast into the lake of fire, their “second death” will begin. It will be an eternal death, an eternal conscious separation from God.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Blissful Paradise for Believers

- 40. But God’s story ends with wonderful news—everyone who has trusted Jesus as his or her Savior will enter a beautiful, sin-free paradise and live there eternally with God. Revelation 21:1—22:5**

State and explain that the paradise theme runs all the way through the Bible. That’s because God has always desired that men and women (and children too!) enjoy life in a setting that has been abundantly blessed by the creative work of God.

- a. For believers to enjoy God’s eternal paradise...**

- They will go up to heaven for it, or...
- God will bring it down to earth for us.

Read Revelation 21:1-3 to find the answer.

If necessary, elaborate on this some more. Most people, including people who have been believers for many years, have a mental image of God’s people (believers) living forever in a non-physical, heavenly paradise with fluffy white clouds all around them. It is true that the current paradise, where believers now go when they die, may be somewhere “out there” beyond this solar system or even outside of this universe.

But, the eternal paradise where believers will live will be on a completely renovated (literal and physical) earth surrounded by new heavens. God created Earth for man to inhabit and enjoy so it should not surprise us that God will create a new earthly paradise for mankind’s eternal home.

- b. Read Revelation 21:4—22:5 to learn more about this eternal paradise.**

Before you read, point out the questions to below to be thinking about as you go through the passage.

- **Who is “the Lamb”?** Hint: See verse 14.

“Lamb” is dominant name used for Jesus in the book of Revelation. It appears 29 times, while “Jesus Christ” appears only seven times and “Christ” appears four times.

Verse 14 connects “the twelve apostles” to the Lamb, so there is no doubt that Jesus is the Lamb in this passage.

Question for the student: “Where else did we see Jesus clearly identified as a lamb?” (See event 22 on page 22.)

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

▪ What will *not* be found in the new, holy city?

The passage clearly states that there will be...

- (1) No tears
- (2) No death
- (3) No sorrow
- (4) No crying
- (5) No pain
- (6) No sinners – cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murders, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and liars
- (7) No night
- (8) Nothing that defiles or causes an abomination or a lie
- (9) No more curse on the earth

Spend some time on this point. Ask: “Which of these (perhaps two or three of them) would you be most happy to see gone forever?”

▪ What are some of the most striking features of this new city?

There are several good responses that could be made to this question, such as...

- (1) Its beauty—“as a bride adorned for her husband”
- (2) The absence of the things mentioned above
- (3) Its glorious radiance
- (4) Its walls, gates, and foundations
- (5) Its massive size
- (6) The presence of God the Father and the Lamb (Jesus)
- (7) The river of water of life
- (8) The tree of life and its fruit

Spend some time on this point. Ask: “Which physical characteristic of this Holy City, the New Jerusalem, impresses you the most?”

▪ Who will be allowed to dwell in this new paradise? Read Revelation 21:27.

“...only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”

Reflect back on the Book of Life in the previous event.

How long will they live there? Read Revelation 22:5.

“Forever and ever” (22:5)

c. Do you think that *your name* is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life?

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Yes

No

Not Sure

Upon what do you base your conclusion?

Encourage the student to place a check mark by the answer that truly reflects what he/she believes.

If the answer is “Yes,” then discuss his/her basis for this conclusion.

If the answer is “No” or “Not Sure,” then also discuss the basis for his/her conclusion.

The next section in the book (pages 32-40) is designed to help students understand more clearly and embrace God’s gift of eternal life—to move from spiritual death to eternal life.

Supplemental Information

Resource Book: In order to understand the paradise theme that runs through the Bible, we strongly recommend Randy Alcorn’s 2004 book, Heaven.

Also, the Randy Alcorn’s website provides a wealth of free information on this subject that is so important to anyone interested in *The Story of Hope*.

<http://www.epm.org/resources-eternity.html>

How is Jesus portrayed in the events on pages 30-31?

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

The Chronological Bridge to Life: *A Chronological-Propositional Presentation of God’s Goods News of Hope*

Pages 32-39 in *The Story of Hope*

Note: If you lack confidence in teaching and discussing the basic doctrines of the Bible, we encourage you to get a good book on basic theology or basic Bible doctrines and study the sections in that book related to theology proper (the doctrine of God), anthropology (the doctrine of man), hamartiology (the doctrine of sin), Christology (the doctrine of Jesus Christ), and soteriology (the doctrine of salvation).

The ABWE CEIM course, *Basic Missionary Theology: Preparing to Do Theology Cross-Culturally* would be very helpful to you. It was designed specifically for applications such as this. See the following web page for more information:

http://www.abwe.org/training/programs/biblical_studies/missionary_theology.asp

Eight Essential Truths Emerge out of the Bible’s Story of Hope

God—What we have learned about our Creator:

The way you approach this discussion about God depends on the student’s current view of God. In order to dialogue appropriately and intelligently with him/her about God, you need to understand his/her view of God (or god or gods or spirits or whatever) and be knowledgeable about how that view differs from and/or agrees with the Bible’s LORD God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

Your “bottom of the double page spread” discussions on pages 12-21 (“What we have learned about God.”) should have brought his/her views about God into open dialogue. Thus, at this point, all you will probably need to do is to summarize what the Bible says about God.

There are at least two options for leading students through a study of the top half of this page (the seven summary statements):

- (1) Ask the student to read the following summary statements prior the class and to indicate from his/her reading, which of these he/she would like to understand better. Spend the time in class helping him/her to clarify those specific concepts.
- (2) You read each of the statements slowly and clearly and ask the student to think (as you read) which statement(s) he/she would like for you to clarify. Then focus on those specific statements in your teaching/discussion.

The objective on this part of the page is to summarize the Bible’s view of who the true LORD God is and what He is like and to check to be sure that the student understands

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

that view clearly and correctly.

1. The God of the Bible has always existed and will continue to exist forever. Because He is eternal, God referred to Himself as the “I AM” (Yahweh or Jehovah) which is translated in our Bibles as LORD.
2. By simply commanding it into existence, God created the world and everything in it. In its original condition, God’s creation was perfect.
3. Throughout the Bible, this Creator-God continually demonstrated that He is all-powerful.
4. In contrast with false gods, the true God is perfectly holy (totally without sin).
5. As the Creator of mankind, God gave men and women clear commands to obey.
6. God is a righteous and fair Judge who must and will punish disobedience.
7. God loves us even when we disobey Him.

Which of these truths about God would you like to understand better?

Circle one or more numbers.

Teach and discuss these truths about God, as is needed. If the student understands these well, then move on with the study.

The Bible says: “*But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*” (Hebrews 11:6)

Explain that this one Bible verse summarizes much of what we have learned about God. Ask the student to read this verse aloud. If you think that you need to explain or elaborate, do so and move on with the study.

Our Faith Response: From the Bible we learn that one, and only one, true eternal and holy God exists, that He is our all-powerful Creator and just Judge, and that we are accountable to Him. Do you believe this?

Emphasize the first phrase—“From the Bible we learn...”

Explain that these are not just your ideas, but this is a very brief summary of what the Bible teaches about God.

Read the statement and direct the question at the end of the paragraph directly, in a heart-to-heart kind of way, to the student—such as, “Roger, do you believe this?”

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

If the response is, “Yes,” then move on with the study. Or, you might want to ask the student what he/she learned about God through this study that was new to him/her.

If the answer is, “No” or “I’m not sure,” then it would be appropriate to ask him/her to share his thoughts—such as, “Roger, I’m interested in knowing what you are thinking.” Or, “What about this statement do you agree with and what about this statement do you disagree with.”

Encourage him/her to feel free to speak openly about his/her doubts. In a culture where students do not want to disappoint their instructors, there will be a strong tendency for the student to give you the answer that he/she knows you want to hear. Be alert to this tendency and lovingly probe to be sure that the response is an honest one. An insincere but instructor-pleasing response is the worst possible thing that could happen here. Underneath a “I’ll tell you what you want to hear” kind of response may be (1) a need for a clearer explanation or (2) an unspoken disagreement with what the Bible says. This is a good time to get clarity on his/her present beliefs.

So what do you do if the student is not convinced of the Biblical view of God?

Explain that you understand his/her concerns and that it’s OK—that you will be praying for him/her as he/she continues to think about this and that you will pray specifically that God will give him/her the faith to believe what the Bible says. Explain that his doubts do not and will not affect your relationship with him/her.

But then, move on to page 33 and continue with the study. There’s only one thing that you would do differently from this point on—don’t ask the “Do you believe this” questions at the bottom of pages 33-39.

If the student doesn’t believe in the Bible’s view of God, then his/her beliefs regarding man, sin, death (God’s judgment for sin), Christ, the cross, faith, and life, are irrelevant. But, it is still a good idea to summarize them for and with him using the activities on pages 33-39.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Man—What we have learned about mankind:

As is true with each of these eight essential gospel concepts in the ChronoBridge to Life, the way you approach this page will depend upon the student’s view of this concept, in this case “mankind” (human beings).

Follow one of the procedures mentioned previously or create an approach that works better for you and the student with whom you are working.

The objective on this part of the page is to summarize the Bible’s view of mankind (human beings) and to check to be sure that the student understands that view clearly and correctly.

- 1. Human beings (people) are uniquely created by God, in His image. As such, we were given some qualities and abilities which God’s other creatures did not receive.**
- 2. These special qualities and abilities equip us to be caretakers of God’s creation, a role that God has assigned to us.**
- 3. God loves all human beings and desires that we be in perfect fellowship with Him and enjoy His presence.**
- 4. Not only did God give us the responsibility and ability to obey Him, He also gave us the capacity to disobey.**
- 5. Because God made us and owns us, every human being is accountable to Him.**
- 6. Human beings were created with a material body as well as an immaterial spirit.**
- 7. The spirit of man will never cease to exist; it will live forever in a resurrected body.**

Which of these truths about mankind would you like to understand better?

Circle one or more numbers.

Teach and discuss these truths about mankind, as is needed. If the student understands these well, then move on with the study.

The Bible says: “*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*” (Genesis 2:7)

Explain that this one Bible verse summarizes much of what we have learned about

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

mankind (human beings). Ask the student to read this verse aloud. If you think that you need to explain or elaborate, do so and move on with the study.

Our Faith Response: From the Bible we learn that we are made by God, loved by God, and that God deserves our full obedience. Do you believe this?

Emphasize the first phrase—“From the Bible we learn...”

Explain that these are not just your ideas, but this is a very brief summary of what the Bible teaches about mankind (human beings).

Note: If the student did not express faith in the Bible’s view of God in your discussion on page 32 in *The Story of Hope*, do not ask the question at the end of this “Our Faith Response” section. But do continue to the next section of the study.

Read the statement and direct the question at the end of the paragraph directly, in a heart-to-heart kind of way, to the student—such as, “Roger, do you believe this?”

If the response is, “Yes,” then move on with the study. Or, you might want to review, at this point, by putting the first two faith statements together before moving on.

If the answer is, “No” or “I’m not sure,” then follow the procedure previously mentioned.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Sin—What we have learned about disobedience to God:

As is true with each of these eight essential gospel concepts in the ChronoBridge to Life, the way you approach this page will depend upon the student’s view of this concept, in this case “sin.”

Follow one of the procedures mentioned previously or create an approach that works better for you and the student with whom you are working.

The objective on this part of the page is to summarize the Bible’s view of sin and to check to be sure that the student understands that view clearly and correctly.

- 1. God created, loved, and provided for Adam and Eve but they rebelled against Him.**
- 2. They disobeyed God, eating fruit from the one tree of which He told them not to eat.**
- 3. Disobeying God is called *sin* and sin is a great offense to God, who is perfect and holy.**
- 4. Adam and Eve’s sin ruined the perfect relationship they had with God and with each other, resulting in a terrible physical and spiritual change for all mankind.**
- 5. All mankind inherited their sinful, rebellious nature. Fighting, war, selfishness, and arrogance are all the results of the rebellion against God in our hearts.**
- 6. The Bible says that we all have sinned. Everyone does things that he or she knows in his heart are wrong.**
- 7. Because God is a holy and just judge, our sin cannot go unpunished.**

Which of these truths about sin would you like to understand better?

Circle one or more numbers.

Teach and discuss these truths about sin, as is needed. If the student understands these well, then move on with the study.

The Bible says: “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*”
(Romans 3:23)

Explain that this one Bible verse summarizes much of what we have learned about sin. Ask the student to read this verse aloud. If you think that you need to explain or elaborate, do so and move on with the study.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Our Faith Response: From the Bible we learn that we have sinned against God and deserve His righteous punishment. Do you believe this?

Emphasize the first phrase—“From the Bible we learn...”

Note: If the student did not express faith in the Bible’s view of God in your discussion on page 32 in *The Story of Hope*, do not ask the question at the end of this “Our Faith Response” section. But do continue to the next section of the study.

Read the statement and direct the question at the end of the paragraph directly, in a heart-to-heart kind of way, to the student—such as, “Roger, do you believe this?”

If the response is, “Yes,” then move on with the study. Or, you might want to quickly review the first three faith responses in a way similar to this:

“So, thus far we’ve seen that the one true God is our Creator and we are accountable to Him. We have learned that He made us in His image and that we are spiritual, enduring beings who have rebelled against Him and brought on ourselves His righteous judgment.”

If the answer is, “No” or “I’m not sure,” then follow the procedure previously mentioned.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Death—What we have learned about God’s penalty for sin:

As is true with each of these eight essential gospel concepts in the ChronoBridge to Life, the way you approach this page will depend upon the student’s view of this concept, in this case “death.”

Follow one of the procedures mentioned previously or create an approach that works better for you and the student with whom you are working.

The objective on this part of the page is to summarize the Bible’s view of death and to check to be sure that the student understands that view clearly and correctly.

1. **The essence of death is separation.**
2. **Adam and Eve died spiritually (became separated from God) the moment they sinned.**
3. **As their descendants, all human beings are born spiritually dead.**
4. **Physical death occurs when the human spirit separates from the body. Adam and Eve also experienced physical death, as do all of their descendants.**
5. **Physical death is not the end of our human existence. After a person dies, he or she will appear before God, who is the holy and just Judge of all mankind.**
6. **People who choose not to trust God’s provision for sin and death will experience eternal death by being separated from God in everlasting conscious punishment.**
7. **Death, in all of its forms, is God’s righteous judgment for sin.**

Which of these truths about death would you like to understand better?

Circle one or more numbers.

Teach and discuss these truths about death, as is needed. If the student understands these well, then move on with the study.

The Bible says: “*And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.*” (Hebrews 9:27)

Explain that this one Bible verse summarizes much of what we have learned about death. Ask the student to read this verse aloud. If you think that you need to explain or elaborate, do so and move on with the study.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Our Faith Response: From the Bible we learn that we are facing God’s judgment and cannot escape it on our own. Do you believe this?

Emphasize the first phrase—“From the Bible we learn...”

Note: If the student did not express faith in the Bible’s view of God in your discussion on page 32 in *The Story of Hope*, do not ask the question at the end of this “Our Faith Response” section. But do continue to the next section of the study.

Read the statement and direct the question at the end of the paragraph directly, in a heart-to-heart kind of way, to the student—such as, “Roger, do you believe this?”

If the response is, “Yes,” then move on with the study. Or, you may want to review using a summary statement such as this:

“Tying it all together, we’ve seen God as Creator, man as accountable, man as a sinner and facing death as a result of his sin. That’s the bad news, but now we come to the good news.”

If the answer is, “No” or “I’m not sure,” then follow the procedure previously mentioned.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Christ—What we have learned about Jesus Christ:

As is true with each of these eight essential gospel concepts in the ChronoBridge to Life, the way you approach this page will depend upon the student’s view of this concept, in this case “Jesus Christ.”

Follow one of the procedures mentioned previously or create an approach that works better for you and the student with whom you are working.

The objective on this part of the page is to summarize the Bible’s view of Jesus Christ and to check to be sure that the student understands that view clearly and correctly.

- 1. Soon after Adam and Eve sinned, God promised to send Someone who would conquer Satan.**
- 2. Throughout the Old Testament, God gradually revealed who this person would be and that through His death forgiveness of sins would be provided for all who would trust Him.**
- 3. To fulfill His promise, God sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue us from judgment.**
- 4. God’s Son was born of a virgin named Mary and was known as Jesus of Nazareth.**
- 5. Jesus lived a completely perfect life of love and obedience to God.**
- 6. During his earthly ministry, Jesus clearly and repeatedly demonstrated, through His claims and miracles, that He is God.**
- 7. As both God and man in one perfect person, Jesus is truly unique and the only way to eternal life.**

Which of these truths about Jesus Christ would you like to understand better?

Circle one or more numbers.

Teach and discuss these truths about Jesus Christ, as is needed. If the student understands these well, then move on with the study.

The Bible says: “*Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’*” (John 14:6)

Explain that this one Bible verse summarizes much of what we have learned about Jesus Christ. Ask the student to read this verse aloud. If you think that you need to explain or elaborate, do so and move on with the study.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Our Faith Response: From the Bible we learn that Jesus Christ is the perfect Son of God and the perfect Son of Man, the only way to eternal life. Do you believe this?

Emphasize the first phrase—“From the Bible we learn...”

Note: If the student did not express faith in the Bible’s view of God in your discussion on page 32 in *The Story of Hope*, do not ask the question at the end of this “Our Faith Response” section. But do continue to the next section of the study.

Read the statement and direct the question at the end of the paragraph directly, in a heart-to-heart kind of way, to the student—such as, “Roger, do you believe this?”

If the response is, “Yes,” then move on with the study. Or, you might want to review like this:

“OK, let’s review: God as Creator, man as accountable, man as a sinner, man as guilty and condemned to death, and the promise of a Savior and His name is Jesus, the promised rescuer. Now let’s see what we learned about how He has provided for our forgiveness and restoration back to God.”

If the answer is, “No” or “I’m not sure,” then follow the procedure previously mentioned.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

CROSS—What we have learned about the death of Jesus Christ:

As is true with each of these eight essential gospel concepts in the ChronoBridge to Life, the way you approach this page will depend upon the student’s view of this concept, in this case “the death of Jesus Christ.”

Follow one of the procedures mentioned previously or create an approach that works better for you and the student with whom you are working.

The objective on this part of the page is to summarize the Bible’s view of the death of Jesus Christ and to check to be sure that the student understands that view clearly and correctly.

- 1. Because God is perfectly holy He must punish those who disobey His commandments.**
- 2. Because God loves us even though we sin, He extends His mercy and grace to us in providing a just way in which we can be forgiven.**
- 3. In the Old Testament, God established a sacrificial system through which sinners could have their sins forgiven.**
- 4. Then God sent His Son Jesus to be the one perfect and final sacrifice for all sin.**
- 5. Because religious and political leaders feared and hated Jesus, they manipulated people and twisted the law to condemn Jesus to die.**
- 6. Jesus willingly died in our place on a cross as our perfect sacrificial Lamb of God, the once-for-all payment for our sins.**
- 7. Three days later, Jesus rose to life again, showing that God accepted Jesus’ sacrifice as a just payment for our sins.**

Which of these truths about the death of Jesus Christ would you like to understand better?

Circle one or more numbers.

Teach and discuss these truths about the death of Jesus Christ, as is needed. If the student understands these well, then move on with the study.

The Bible says: “*Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.*” (1 Peter 2:24)

Explain that this one Bible verse summarizes much of what we have learned about the

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

death of Jesus Christ. Ask the student to read this verse aloud. If you think that you need to explain or elaborate, do so and move on with the study.

Our Faith Response: From the Bible we learn that Jesus Christ, God’s Son, died for our sins and rose from the dead to rescue us from death and give us eternal life. Do you believe this?

Emphasize the first phrase—“From the Bible we learn...”

Note: If the student did not express faith in the Bible’s view of God in your discussion on page 32 in *The Story of Hope*, do not ask the question at the end of this “Our Faith Response” section. But do continue to the next section of the study.

Read the statement and direct the question at the end of the paragraph directly, in a heart-to-heart kind of way, to the student—such as, “Roger, do you believe this?”

If the response is, “Yes,” then move on with the study. Or, you may want to review like this:

“Let’s review: God is our Creator, we are accountable to Him and guilty of sin and death is the result of our sins. But God loves us and provided a Savior who died in our place to fulfill God’s righteous demands against us so that we can come to Him.”

If the answer is, “No” or “I’m not sure,” then follow the procedure previously mentioned.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Faith—What we have learned about trusting Jesus Christ:

As is true with each of these eight essential gospel concepts in the ChronoBridge to Life, the way you approach this page will depend upon the student’s view of this concept, in this case “faith in Jesus Christ.”

Follow one of the procedures mentioned previously or create an approach that works better for you and the student with whom you are working.

The objective on this part of the page is to summarize the Bible’s view of faith in Jesus Christ and to check to be sure that the student understands that view clearly and correctly.

1. **In contrast to other religions of the world, the gospel of Jesus Christ offers eternal salvation in a manner that does not require people to work for it or earn it.**
2. **As sinful beings, no human being could earn salvation even if he or she wanted to and diligently tried to do so.**
3. **Through the death of His Son Jesus, our loving and righteous God provided the way to pay our infinite sin debt for us.**
4. **Because Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, God extends salvation freely to us as a gift.**
5. **God promises to forgive us if we repent and believe (trust) in His Son, Jesus Christ.**
6. **Repentance occurs when our former false views of God, ourselves, and our sins are deeply changed to conform to God’s views.**
7. **To believe is to trust Jesus (place our faith in Jesus), and Jesus alone, to save us.**

Which of these truths about faith in Jesus Christ would you like to understand better?

Circle one or more numbers.

Teach and discuss these truths about faith in Jesus Christ, as is needed. If the student understands these well, then move on with the study.

The Bible says: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Explain that this one Bible verse summarizes much of what we have learned about faith in Jesus Christ. Ask the student to read this verse aloud. If you think that you need to explain or elaborate, do so and move on with the study.

Our Faith Response: From the Bible we learn that we must trust in Jesus’ death on the cross as the only satisfactory payment for our sins, as we abandon our trust in other things that we formerly relied upon to save us. Do you believe this?

Emphasize the first phrase—“From the Bible we learn...”

Note: If the student did not express faith in the Bible’s view of God in your discussion on page 32 in *The Story of Hope*, do not ask the question at the end of this “Our Faith Response” section. But do continue to the next section of the study.

Read the statement and direct the question at the end of the paragraph directly, in a heart-to-heart kind of way, to the student—such as, “Roger, do you believe this?”

If the response is, “Yes,” then move on with the study. Or, you may want to review like this:

“Roger, this time please review this story for me. Starting with God, tell me the story as though you are the teacher and I am your student who needs to understand the story of God. Roger, put it in your own words and walk me through the bridge.” (Listen carefully to him to see if he really understands the gospel. Share with Roger when you came to put your trust in Christ and then ask him when he came to really understand the story and put his trust in Jesus alone to forgive his sins.)

If the answer is, “No” or “I’m not sure,” then follow the procedure previously mentioned.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

Life—What we have learned about eternal life:

As is true with each of these eight essential gospel concepts in the ChronoBridge to Life, the way you approach this page will depend upon the student’s view of this concept, in this case “eternal life.”

Follow one of the procedures mentioned previously or create an approach that works better for you and the student with whom you are working.

The objective on this part of the page is to summarize the Bible’s view of eternal life and to check to be sure that the student understands that view clearly and correctly.

1. **When we repent and trust in Jesus, we pass from spiritual death to spiritual life.**
2. **The eternal spiritual life that God has promised becomes our present and everlasting possession, never to be forfeited.**
3. **Our spiritual life results in new desires and motivations, such as loving, obeying, worshipping, and serving God from our hearts.**
4. **Our new relationship to God frees us from the fear of death, knowing that our names are recorded in the Lamb’s Book of Life and that death is the entrance into God’s presence.**
5. **It is now possible to experience the love, joy, and fulfillment that God desires for us.**
6. **We will enjoy life eternally in the presence of God in a beautiful, sinless and pain-free paradise on a perfectly restored, new Earth.**
7. **Then and only, we will understand the full significance of the Bible’s story of hope.**

Which of these truths about eternal life would you like to understand better?

Circle one or more numbers.

Teach and discuss these truths about eternal life, as is needed. If the student understands these well, then move on with the study.

The Bible says: “*Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?’*” (John 11:25-26)

Explain that this one Bible verse summarizes much of what we have learned about

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

eternal life. Ask the student to read this verse aloud. If you think that you need to explain or elaborate, do so and move on with the study.

Our Faith Response: From the Bible we learn that Jesus alone has power over death and that He gives eternal life to those who trust solely in Him for the forgiveness of sins. Do you believe this?

Emphasize the first phrase—“From the Bible we learn...”

Note: If the student did not express faith in the Bible’s view of God in your discussion on page 32 in *The Story of Hope*, do not ask the question at the end of this “Our Faith Response” section. But do continue to the next section of the study.

Read the statement and direct the question at the end of the paragraph directly, in a heart-to-heart kind of way, to the student—such as, “Roger, do you believe this?”

If the response is, “Yes,” then move on with the study.

If the answer is, “No” or “I’m not sure,” then follow the procedure previously mentioned.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

A Personal Faith Response

Page 40

Overview of a Typical Way to Use This Page

Before you use page 40 in *The Story of Hope*, you might want to download and read the free article “What Must I [Really] Do to Be Saved?” from this page of our website: <http://www.goodsoil.com/resources/downloads/>

This final page in *The Story of Hope* was designed so that it could be used in a variety of ways, depending upon what is most appropriate for a specific Bible study, student and/or culture. Here is an example of one way it could be used:

If the student answers “Yes” to the “Do you believe this?” questions on pages 32-39 and those individual faith responses seemed to be sincere, then this page would just serve as a capstone for all of those positive responses.

But, you may ask, “What final faith-response step should the student take at this point, if any?”

First: If he/she does truly believe (trust) what the Bible teaches about God, mankind, sin, death, Christ, the cross & resurrection, faith in Jesus Christ, and eternal life, then he/she is a “believer”—and a recipient of God’s gift of eternal life.

Because the Bible clearly teaches that it is by believing (trusting) in what God has done for us through Jesus Christ that we are saved from our sins. The tricky (and crucial) matter here is to distinguish between “head belief” which does not save and “heart belief” which does.

Second: It is probably helpful to lead the student to do something here to mark (in his/her own memory) his/her overall faith response to God’s free offer of salvation. But if you do this, be sure to clarify that signing a form or praying a prayer is not what saves; it’s his/her faith in Jesus Christ that saves.

Here’s one suggestion:

- Ask him/her to read aloud the statements in the middle section of page 40.
- Focus on the last statement (“I am trusting Jesus Christ alone...”). Ask if he/she can sincerely make that statement. If so...
- Then, ask if he/she would like to talk to God now and thank Him for what He has done for Him. If so, (1) you lead in prayer first and (2) then invite him to talk to God to thank Him for what God has done for him.

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

- Then ask: “If you sincerely believe this, the blank lines are here for you to create a record of your personal faith response to God’s gift of eternal salvation.”

What do you do if the student is not willing or ready to embrace God’s gift of eternal life?

By all means, don’t coerce or pressure him/her. You may want to pray with him, at this time, for God to give him/her faith to believe. Explain that he/she can contact you at any time to discuss the matter further. Perhaps, you might want to set up another appointment for the near future in order to discuss the matter again.

Personalize the following words of Jesus. Instead of “*the world*,” “*whoever*,” and “*he who*,” think of yourself as the object of Jesus’ promises.

Explain to the student how to personalize the following Bible verses and illustrate it by doing it for him/her. The highlighted words should help you to think through how this would be done.

John 3:16-18

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that if whoever [person’s name] believes in Him [he/she] should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. ¹⁸ [If] He who [person’s name] believes in Him [he/she] is not condemned; but [if] he who does not believe [he/she] is condemned already, because he/she has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Example: ¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that if John Doe believes in Him John Doe should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. ¹⁸If John Doe believes in Him He is not condemned; but if John Doe does not believe he is condemned already, because John Doe has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

I now understand that the God of the Bible is the one True God. He is perfect and holy.

Through the teaching of the Bible I now see myself much differently than I previously did. I now realize that I was born with a sinful nature, that I have disobeyed God

The Story of Hope – Leader’s Guide

continually, and that my sin has deeply grieved God who made me and loves me. I know that my sin has separated me from God and that the just punishment for my sin is eternal separation from Him in a literal place of torment that the Bible calls *Hell*.

I understand that the death of God’s Son Jesus Christ is the only hope for me to be forgiven, for me to escape the eternal punishment for my sins, and for me to receive God’s gift of eternal life.

I am now trusting Jesus Christ and His death on the cross, and no one or nothing else, as the only sufficient remedy for my sin problem and its dreadful consequences.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Explain, to the point there is no misunderstanding, that signing one’s name here does not cause a person to be forgiven of his/her sins. Be sure that the student understands that he/she is forgiven of his/her sins (and receives God’s free gift of eternal life & becomes a member of God’s family) when he/she believes (from the heart)

Basic Steps In Following Jesus

If the student becomes a believer during this Bible study process, or was a believer prior to the study, show him/her a copy of *The Way to Joy*. Encourage him/her to continue your Bible study series using *The Way to Joy*.

Begin Your Basic Steps as a Follower of Jesus Christ

- Lesson 1: The Story of Hope Review
- Lesson 2: The ChronoBridge to Life Review
- Lesson 3: Salvation Assurance & Security
- Lesson 4: The Bible
- Lesson 5: Prayer
- Lesson 6: The Holy Spirit
- Lesson 7: Personal Holiness
- Lesson 8: Witnessing
- Lesson 9: The Local Church
- Lesson 10: God’s Plan for You